

INSIDE THE RING

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NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Customer,

Welcome to the archives of the RossBoxing training newsletter **INSIDE THE RING**. This e-book contains archives of past issues from December 2002 through June 2004.

This e-book will not read like a “book”. Each month’s newsletter has been pieced together into one giant archive. Each chapter heading is independent (taken from a separate newsletter).

INSIDE THE RING is a monthly training newsletter that is delivered to all customers of **The Boxer’s Guide To Performance Enhancement**. The purpose of the newsletter is to extend the learning experience that is delivered through the book.

Boxing training continues to evolve. **INSIDE THE RING** allows us to evolve and keep pace with advancements in training and sports performance nutrition. This e-book serves as an extension of the book, designed to assist with your training and nutritional program.

Throughout this e-book, I have archived each month’s newsletter and created four categories including Training Advice, Supplement Info, Lessons Learned, and Additional Tips.

If you ever have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me your ideas. I respond to all emails so I encourage you to pass along your comments and suggestions.

Train hard!

Ross Enamait

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TRAINING ADVICE

TRAINING CAMP

TRAINING AT THE CATSKILLS, NEW YORK

In December 2002, I was fortunate to train in the Catskills, New York at a training camp with 1996 US Olympian Lawrence Clay-Bey and former Light Heavyweight contender John "Iceman" Scully. John is currently training Clay-Bey while continuing his own professional boxing career. John Scully has fought for the world title in a very close battle with Michael Nunn. He fought in the Olympic Trials in 1988 before mounting an impressive professional career that continues today.

At the time of the bout, Lawrence Clay-Bey was 17-1 as a Heavyweight. He was preparing for a main event bout against Charles Shufford (19-2) on January 3rd, 2003. Charles Shufford is best known for his role as George Foreman in the Will Smith movie "Ali".

I have received several questions about boxing training camps and the specifics of a camp. Many professional fighters prepare for major bouts at secluded training camps. There are no distractions at camp. The fighter can stay focused on his preparations. The purpose of camp is to eat, sleep, and dream boxing, without interruption. Most professional training camps last six weeks. Training camp is very intense, so it is important to arrive already in shape. A poorly conditioned fighter will be unable to recover from the intense training sessions that take place throughout the day.

Most camps include six training days per week, with a rest day on Sunday. The day of rest is very important. There is no shame in resting, as the body needs rest to fully recover.

I am often asked whether it is permissible to take an occasional day off to rest. The answer is a most definite YES! Failure to rest will surely lead to over-training. Many fighters feel that they must train seven days per week, year round. This is a mistake.

The training routines discussed in **The Boxer's Guide To Performance Enhancement** are very intense. It is imperative that you take one day of rest per

week to ensure muscle growth and recovery. There is no shame in resting. Smart fighters realize the importance of a rest day.

A TYPICAL DAY AT CAMP

Now that we know the importance of rest, let's look inside a typical day of a professional boxing training camp. Each day consists of two or three training sessions. Certain days are geared towards conditioning with others more towards sparring.

MORNING:

The morning is dedicated to roadwork. We run each day at camp (with the exception of the Sunday rest). Roadwork consists of sprint work, intervals, hills, and distance running. More intense runs (sprints, intervals, hills) are conducted on days when there is no sparring. It does not make sense to undergo intense interval work before a sparring session. Sparring sessions at camp are intense, against quality boxers. These sparring sessions take place at a fast pace with skilled fighters so it is important to enter the ring with a fresh pair of legs.

Immediately after our morning run, we would head to the boxing gym, which was conveniently located next door. We would perform calisthenics such as sit-ups, pushups, pull-ups, and neck exercises. We performed these exercises each day.

MID-DAY:

The mid-day session consists of sparring and a general boxing workout. The boxing workout will consist of bag work, focus mitt training, shadow boxing, and conditioning drills. We often finish these routines with strength training and plyometrics.

Sparring days include hard sparring with quality boxers that are brought to the camp for the sole purpose of sparring. A professional fighter needs "professional" sparring when preparing for a high profile bout. Sparring helps the fighter perfect his timing, reactions, and combination punching. Sparring is as close as it gets to the actual fight. Sparring sessions in training camp are conducted at a faster pace than a typical sparring session. When we are in camp, it means that the fight is approaching. Now is the time to pick up the intensity.

Please note that sparring should not always be conducted at an intense pace. There are several differences between a typical sparring session and a sparring session at a professional training camp. During camp, we are dealing with

professional athletes who are in excellent condition. These athletes compete at elite levels, so require fast paced sparring to simulate the actual fight. A boxer who is new to the sport should focus more energy towards learning the fundamentals, rather than sparring at an all out pace.

Hard sparring is not necessary on a year round basis. Too much sparring will leave the fighter exhausted and burned out. For this reason, the intense sparring at training camp only takes place during the final weeks of preparation.

EVENING:

In the evening, we conducted a water workout (3-4 days per week) in an Olympic sized swimming pool. The pool is excellent for a variety of conditioning drills. Swimming is an excellent exercise that can improve strength and stamina.

WATER WORKOUTS

Fast Paced Swimming – It is important to remember the basic principles discussed in **The Boxer's Guide**. We are all familiar with the importance of anaerobic conditioning. You can swim at an “aerobic” pace or an “anaerobic” pace. I prefer to swim laps at a “sprint” pace.

It will not take long for fatigue to set in, as your heart rate approaches anaerobic levels. Training above the anaerobic threshold has many purposes. You will improve anaerobic metabolism. You will condition the body to tolerate elevated lactic acid levels. Swimming faster than threshold speeds also develops muscular strength and power. Fast paced swimming is excellent for anaerobic conditioning. It is important however to allow the body adequate time to rest and recover. I only recommend intense swimming 2 or 3 times per week. Fast paced swimming without sufficient rest will fatigue you beyond the point where you can maintain an efficient or effective stroke form.

Endurance Training – You can also use the pool to focus on endurance training. Basic endurance training, cardiovascular conditioning, and swimming for weight loss occur below the anaerobic threshold. Fat is metabolized aerobically. You can lose weight and gradually improve cardiovascular fitness below the anaerobic threshold. A typical endurance swimming session would consist of swimming 20 laps at a moderate pace without stopping.

Pool Running – Try running in the pool for a great workout without stressing your joints and tendons. Pool running is best performed with the water depth at waist level. We run from side to side in the pool to keep a constant water level.

The water provides resistance while running. You will definitely feel the legs burning. I suggest running 3-minute intervals in the pool at a brisk pace.

Water Shadow Boxing – The pool can also provide resistance when you shadow box underwater. Keep your head above water and throw combinations underwater. Water shadow boxing will help to improve stamina while allowing you to concentrate on technique.

Prior to this training camp I had never used swimming to prepare for a bout. Lawrence Clay-Bey convinced me to give swimming a try and I can testify to its benefits. You can perform several drills in the pool. Keep in mind however; we are training to fight, NOT training to swim. For this reason, use the pool to improve condition, but do not transform your entire workout into a swimming session. Lastly, always remember the importance of rest and recovery. Swimming can be very tiring to the body (particularly if it is new to you). Do not over train in the pool. Always listen to your body.

SUMMARY OF CAMP

- Get plenty of rest to foster recovery
- Be sure to stretch after your workouts to expedite recovery
- There is no substitute for proper nutritional habits. You will need plenty of complex carbohydrates and protein as well as vitamins, minerals, and water
- Plan your workouts around hard sparring days. It is important to enter the ring fresh
- There is no substitute for good sparring. Boxing is a sport that is learned by “doing” not by watching

SPARRING REVISITED

Boxing is a skill sport. There is a difference between conditioning and skill development. As a boxer, you must train hard to maximize anaerobic endurance and explosive power. You must then apply this strength and endurance inside the ring. You cannot rely solely on conditioning if you lack the skills to deliver it.

One trainer recently commented, "Conditioning is 80% of amateur boxing". I tend to agree with this assessment. Just remember that the other 20% is pretty damn important!. Conditioning and skill training go hand in hand. You must be in shape to execute your skills throughout the course of a fight. You need skills to effectively score points and avoid punishment.

It is great to work with a trainer on various punching and defensive drills. A trainer can teach you technique on the focus mitts and heavy bag. You must then bring these techniques to the ring. You must practice these techniques at the gym if you expect to use them during an actual bout.

There are no substitutes for sparring. There is no debating this issue. If you want to compete and excel, you must spar. You can hit the bag all day and night and it will not replace the importance of sparring. The bag does not hit back. The bag sits still as you punch. You control the movements of the bag. You can take a 5 second "active" rest while working the bag. You can have a lazy round on the bag without consequences. The bag will never hurt you, side step you, or fake a jab then hook. The bag will never hit you with a body shot or fight you from the southpaw stance.

You must step inside the ring with a live body to prepare for a bout. Sparring is where you practice putting combinations together. Sparring is where you work on reactions and defense. Sparring is where you practice new moves. You will only use newfound techniques if you drill them inside the ring.

If you do not have a fight coming up, you do not need to spar as often or as hard, but you can (and should) still spar to keep your skills sharp. As a fighter, you must focus on continuous improvement. You cannot cram for a fight like an exam. There are no all night studying sessions that will prepare you to fight. You must stay in the gym and constantly work on new skills and enhance your performance. Boxing is not a seasonal sport. If you are serious about boxing, you must stay in the gym on a year-round basis.

USA BOXING CAMP

The program below came from the 1993 USA – Canada Amateur boxing camp. Members of the team included Eric Morel and Byron Mitchell. One of the roadwork routines is listed below:

SAMPLE ROADWORK WORKOUT

- Two mile run (moderate to fast pace)
- Sprint 100 meters
- Shadow box one round (3-minute round)
- Run backwards 200 meters
- Sprint 100 meters
- Shadow box one round (3-minute round)
- Sprint 100 meters
- Jog with hands up throwing punches 400 meters
- Shadow box one round (3-minute round)
- Sprint 100 meters
- Run backward 100 meters
- Jog 400 meters
- Walk to cool down

SAMPLE DAY OF TRAINING

Below is one day's training schedule for the camp. The camp consisted of either 2 or 3 training sessions per day.

MORNING:

7:00 AM – Roadwork on the track

MID-DAY:

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM – Resistance Training and Plyometric Routine

- Warm up and stretching
- 3 sets of 8 reps for each exercise with 1-minute rest between sets
- Single foot side-to-side ankle hops
- Lateral jumps over barrier
- Squat jumps
- Plyometric pushups
- Medicine ball chest pass
- Medicine ball overhand throw

- Flexibility exercises

AFTERNOON:

4:00 PM – Gym Workout

- Warm up and stretching
- Abdominal exercise
- 2 rounds – Shadow Boxing
- 2 rounds – Slip and Counter
- 2 rounds – Football Shield Drill
- 2 rounds – Heavy Bag Drill
- 2 rounds – Double End Bag
- 2 rounds – Neck Exercises
- Jump rope 9 minutes – alternate 30 second intervals of all out intensity

I highly recommend the sample roadwork schedule. It offers a nice break from a structured interval schedule. The sample roadwork session mixes running with shadow boxing. You should be able to shadow box at a fast pace between intervals. Your legs will be tired so it will be difficult to push yourself through the round. This is excellent preparation for competition.

USA BOXING CAMP (CONTINUED)

Below I have listed another workout session from the previously discussed USA Boxing camp...

- 1. Warm-up exercises:** 10-15 minutes (jump rope, jumping jacks, etc.)
- 2. Stretching exercises:** 10 minutes
- 3. Shadow boxing:** 4 x 3-minute rounds with 30 seconds rest between rounds
- 4. Heavy bag drills:** 3 x 4-minute rounds
 - **Round 1** - 1 minute on, 1 minute off
 - **Round 2** - 30 seconds on, 30 seconds off
 - **Round 3** - 15 seconds on, 15 seconds off
 - **Round 4** - 10 seconds on, 10 seconds off

Each interval on the bag should consist of HIGH intensity punching.

- 5. Hand mitts:** 2 x 3-minute rounds

6. Jump rope: 10 minutes. Move in all directions. Mix in several 30-second intervals of HIGH intensity jumping.

7. Speed bag: 2 x 3-minute rounds

8. Double end bag: 4 x 3-minute rounds

9. Exercises and calisthenics: Several bodyweight exercise routines were used consisting of exercises such as pushups, pull-ups, and v-ups. One of the circuits is listed below.

Sample Bodyweight Circuit

- Burpees
- Pull-ups
- Lunges
- Pushups
- V-ups
- Bodyweight Squats (squats without weight)
- Close Grip Pushups

Perform each exercise for 30 seconds, and then rest 30 seconds (or less). For example, perform Burpees for 30 seconds, rest 30 seconds, perform pull-ups for 30 seconds, rest 30 seconds, and so on. After you have completed the entire circuit, rest for 1-minute and repeat. Continue until you have completed the circuit 3 times.

This circuit will increase strength and endurance. You will quickly learn that your bodyweight provides plenty of resistance to keep the muscles burning!

POINTERS FROM USA BOXING CAMP

HOW TO BOX A TALL OPPONENT

- Keep in his face.
- Keep him moving back.
- Make him punch with you.
- Make him fight your fight by weaving and punching inside the body.
- Work on the body so he will drop his guard from the head, quickly go to the head.

How To Box A RUSHER

- Stay on your toes.
- Plant your left foot and pivot off left toes.
- Keep your jab busy, hit with the right hand and short uppercut.
- Keep your opponent on the end of your jab.
- If your opponent gets inside, step to the side or spin out.
- Never go straight back.

How To Box A JABBER

- Catch his jab with your right hand.
- Counter over the top of his jab with a right hand.
- Slip to your right and counter the left jab with a right uppercut.
- Catch the jab and counter with your own jab simultaneously.

How To Box A SOUTHPAW

- Make a southpaw back up
- It is hard to hit a good southpaw with a jab
- Be able to hit with right hand leads and left hooks
- Always stay to your opponent's jabbing side.

How To Box A SLUGGER

- Keep your opponent at long range.
- Keep your opponent in the center of the ring.
- Don't let your opponent get set.
- Be able to move from side to side.
- Keep your jab busy.

How To Box AN OPPONENT WITH 2 STRONG HANDS

- An opponent with two strong hands has a tendency to have poor balance.
- Feint your opponent, keep him out of position
- Watch your opponent's shoulders, there will be movement in the shoulder before he delivers a punch.
- Keep your hands high and close to the body.

These tips from USA Boxing are helpful. The only way to use these tips is to practice inside the ring. You should spar different fighters so you can adjust to

different styles. If there are only one or two fighters in your weight class, you should take the initiative to locate additional sparring partners from other gyms. I used to drive 50 miles three nights per week to spar. You need to make this type of sacrifice if you are serious about this sport. There is no substitute for sparring when preparing for a competition.

COUNTERING THE JAB

It is no secret that the jab is the most important punch in boxing. The jab sets up all of your combinations. A good boxer can win rounds with the jab alone. You should learn to snap the jab like a whip. You should throw 1, 2, and 3 jabs at a time. You should also mix in feints to keep your opponent off balance.

This information should not strike you as a surprise. We all know that the jab is the most important punch in boxing. Unfortunately, many boxers never take the time to perfect the punch. Most guys like to load up on power shots and therefore neglect the jab. This is a huge mistake. The jab sets everything up. The jab keeps your opponent guessing. The jab puts you in range to land power punches.

Okay, we know the jab is the most important punch in boxing... Let's talk about what to do when facing an opponent who has mastered the jab. How do you defend against a sharp jab? You may face an opponent with an awesome jab. The jab will be fast and furious. A sharp jab will sting you. Once your opponent establishes his jab, he establishes control.

Your job is to prevent him from gaining control. You must counter off his jab and take the punch away from him. If you can learn to counter the jab, your opponent will hesitate to step in with the punch.

COUNTER PUNCHES AGAINST THE JAB

Block a Jab and Jab: Catch the jab with your right hand close by your face (like you are catching a baseball). Throw your own counter jab as soon as you see his jab coming. You should hit your opponent with the counter at the same time you catch his jab. This is one of the most basic, yet effective counter punches against the jab.

Outside Slip - Right Uppercut: Slip the jab to the right. Pivot at the hips and throw a quick uppercut to the chin or body.

Inside Slip - Left Uppercut: Slip inside the jab (to the left). Throw a quick left uppercut to the chin. You can also use a left hook for this counter. A good friend of mine, Felix Cruz (who has been ranked in the top ten at 125 lbs as an amateur), was known to slip the jab to the left and land a double left hook (body and head). This counter can be very effective (if you are fast enough).

Inside Slip - Right Hand: Slip the jab to the left and at the same time throw an overhand right, over the incoming jab. Be sure to keep your left hand up by your face to defend against a straight right hand.

Right Hand Parry - Right: Parry the jab with your right hand (close by your face, DON'T REACH or you will be open to a left hook). As you catch the jab with your right, you continue forward with a straight right hand (one fluid motion). You knock the jab down for a split second and throw your right hand down the same path that the jab was delivered. Try to follow this counter with a left hook to the head. This is my favorite counter punch...

AGAINST A SOUTHPAW

Slip Left - Straight Right Hand: Slip the right jab to the left and throw a straight right hand down the middle. You can follow up with a left hook to the body.

Catch and Jab: Catch the right jab with your left glove and return your own jab down the same path.

Hook with the Jab: As soon as you see the jab coming, throw a short left hook while slipping to the left. You must be fast for this counter, but it is very effective.

FOR OUR SOUTHPAWS IN THE CROWD

Right Hand Parry - Right Jab: Catch the left jab with your right glove and counter with your right jab, all in one fluid motion.

Slip Right - Straight Left Hand: Slip the jab to your right and simultaneously throw a straight left hand down the middle.

Right Hook with the Jab: Throw your right hook as soon as you see the jab coming. You can also slip or take a quick sidestep to your right. Mike Oliver, an undefeated prospect who is 6-0 as a pro, uses this counter punch very effectively. I have been sparring with Mike for several years. He has an excellent right hook, which he counters with often.

MIXING UP YOUR ATTACK

A “headhunter” is a fighter who focuses solely on his opponent’s head. He throws punches to the head, completely neglecting the body. If you headhunt against a good boxer, he will make you miss all night. When a fighter uses his feet, along with head movement, he becomes difficult to hit.

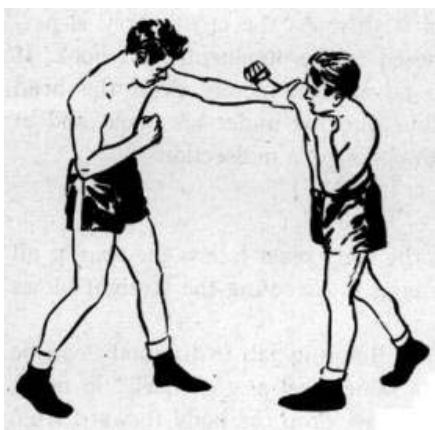
When boxing such an opponent, it is useful to attack the body. Working the body will slow a fighter who uses his legs to circle the ring. Experienced boxers recognize the importance of bodywork. You can step in behind the jab, to bring the fight to the inside. This technique is useful against many fighters.

Another useful technique involves attacking the arms, shoulders, and chest. Do not limit yourself to the body and head. There will be times when your opponent is covered up, with no openings. Or perhaps his defense is extremely effective. Have you ever boxed an opponent who would slip every punch you threw? It is very frustrating. When faced against such an opponent, you cannot box on the outside. If your punches are not landing, you must adjust.

Rocky Marciano was known to throw punches at his opponent’s shoulders and arms. It hurts to be hit in the arms. After a few rounds, these punches take a toll. Your opponent’s arms will begin to cramp up, limiting their ability to return effective punches.

I recently sparred with Jose Rivera while he was preparing for his bout against previously unbeaten Michel Trabant (Jose won his bout to become the WBA World Champion). While sparring with Jose, he hit my left shoulder with a straight right hand. My muscle was in a knot for the entire round.

If you cannot find the head, keep throwing punches. It hurts to take punches off the arms and shoulders. Believe me, it works!



Another effective technique is to use **your** punches, to stop incoming punches. In the illustration, you can see how the fighter on the left has used his jab to stop the incoming right hand. In the illustration, he is using an open hand. I prefer to maintain a clenched fist while striking the shoulders and arms. Your jab will beat any right hand if timed correctly.

If you find yourself missing, stay focused and attack the arms, shoulders, chest, and body. These punches may not seem effective, but they will take their toll throughout the course of the bout.

JABBING TO THE CHEST

Former world champion Buddy McGirt is now recognized as one of the best trainers in boxing. When Buddy works the corner, there is a good chance that he will instruct his fighter to, "Jab him to the chest". Buddy knows the effectiveness of a stiff jab to the chest.

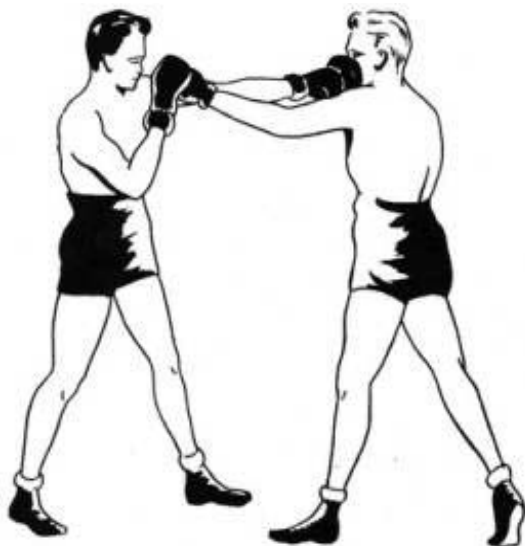
Early in a bout, your opponent will be carrying his hands high, protecting the face. It will difficult to land a crisp jab to the face. You will have a better chance landing a hard jab to the chest. This will also take the wind out of your opponent, just like a body punch.

Landing a crisp jab to the chest will slow your opponent, causing his hands to drop, which will open his face for power punches. Shorter boxers can also jab to the chest when fighting taller opponents. It will be much easier to land the jab to the chest, and just as effective as a head shot.

When your opponent is slipping punches with his head, remember that his body does not move. Let him slip the jab to the head. His body and chest will remain open for punishment. As you continue to land these punches, you will notice that his head movement begins to slow. The key to landing these punches is to throw them! You must make a conscious (and consistent) effort to alter your attack. Do not become a headhunter, or a good boxer will pick you apart. Jab to the chest, jab to the shoulders, step in and work the body. Mix it up.

Many boxers focus all of their energy towards the head. Do not limit yourself. Let your hands go. Judges will often score rounds for the more active fighter. If you are not landing to the face, do not become frustrated. Keep the pressure on by altering your attack to various parts of the body.

ADDITIONAL COUNTER PUNCHES

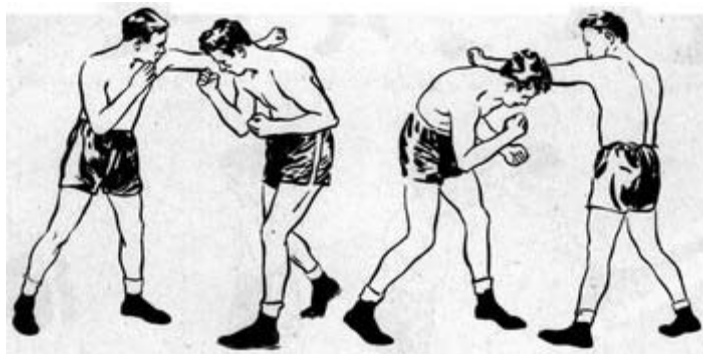


Block a Jab and Jab – This counter is one of the most effective punches against the jab. This counter punch relies on timing. You must anticipate your opponent's jab. As soon as he begins to throw his jab, you will position the right hand in front of your face to catch the jab, while simultaneously throwing your own jab. You do not catch the jab first, and then throw your jab. Your jab should land at the **same time** that his jab hits your right glove. Imagine that you are throwing this counter punch in a quite room. There will only be ONE sound. Your jab will land, as you simultaneously catch your opponent's jab, all in one motion.

The biggest mistake when learning this counter punch is to extend the right arm in front of the face to catch the incoming jab. Do not over-anticipate by reaching out. Let the jab come to you. When you reach out with the right hand, you open yourself up to a counter left hook. A good fighter will see you reaching, and feint to draw your hands out, and follow up with a left hook.

Keep the right hand close to your face. Imagine that your hand is a baseball mitt and catch the jab. When you become proficient with this move, you can add a right hand behind the jab. When thrown correctly, you will land a 1-2 so fast that your opponent doesn't know what hit him. These counter punches will take your opponent's jab away from him. He will become gun-shy, because each time he jabs, he eats a counter punch.

For the southpaws in crowd, you can mimic this movement with one hand. You will need to catch the left jab with your lead right hand, and then quickly continue with a right jab. This will all happen in one fluent motion. You will first parry the jab, and then immediately counter with your own jab.



Slipping Punches - One sign of an experienced boxer is his ability to gracefully slip incoming punches. You have surely heard boxing described as the art of hitting, without being hit. One of the best ways to bring truth to these words is by mastering the art of slipping.

After slipping a punch, you should find yourself in position to deliver a counter punch. To slip incoming punches, you must remain relaxed. You will be within your opponent's punching range. If you are tense, you will not be able to properly slip punches. You must remain calm and relaxed while your opponent fires punches in your direction.

In the illustration above, you can see the examples of slipping to the left, and to the right. A proper slip involves a small movement. If you move the head too much, you will be out of position to deliver a counter punch. You should slip incoming punches just enough to get out of the way. The punches should literally fly by your face.

Well-known trainer and gloveman Johnny Duke once described the head movement of a slip as that of a pigeon. He told me to walk to the park and throw some popcorn on the ground in front of the pigeons. Watch how they bob their head to the side to pick up the food. We all laughed at Johnny when he told this story, but looking back, I realize that his words were not far from the truth.

LEARNING TO SLIP

To properly slip punches, you must learn to remain calm under fire. You cannot slip effectively if you tense up whenever a punch is thrown. Learning to relax takes time, and comes with experience.

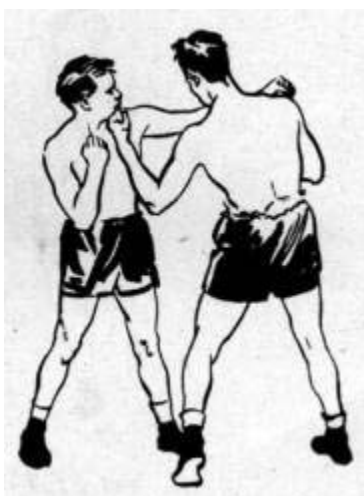
As for actual drills, I recommend that you work with a coach or sparring partner. You can practice slipping various punches. Start with the jab, as this is the most common punch. It is most often thrown, and easiest to slip. Have a partner throw controlled jabs towards you. Practice slipping to the left and right. You can alternate rounds, one round you work on defense, the next round your partner works on defense.

If you have a trainer who works the mitts, have him throw jabs at you while you practice slipping and countering. It takes time to become proficient at slipping punches. When you practice with your coach or partner, do not become "programmed". I see many young fighters begin to slip before the punch is thrown. Wait to see the punch coming, and then REACT. In a real bout, your opponent will not tell you what he is going to throw. If you are a coach, you should mix in some right hands to keep your fighters honest. Don't tell them what is coming next. Let your fighter learn to slip the jab and right hand. These drills will pay huge dividends if you practice consistently.

If you want to train slipping on your own, you can use a maize bag. Mike Tyson was known to use a similar bag in his earlier days. A maize bag is a small sand-filled bag that you can use to practice the movement of the slip. You do not punch the maize bag. It will swing back and forth, as you practice slipping to each side. Move your head from side to side while throwing counter punches in the air. You can make your own maize bag by filling a sock with sand. Hang it from a rope and you are ready to go.

Just remember that no bag can teach you to slip. You need live sparring and partner drills to truly develop the timing necessary to slip and counter REAL punches. You cannot learn to relax under fire, until you are in fact under fire. This means that you must step inside the ring to spar. There are no substitutes for quality sparring and partner drills.

COUNTERING OFF THE SLIP



When you slip an incoming punch, you should be in position to counter. In the illustration to the left, the fighter has slipped to his left, and followed up with a left uppercut to the chin. When you slip the jab to the left, be careful to avoid a right hand. Your hands should remain up as you slip, and your counter punch must be delivered quickly. When you slip the jab to your left, you will be in position to land the left uppercut or left hook.

If you are southpaw, you can slip the left jab to your right and follow up with a quick right hook.

As you continue to practice counter punching, you will begin to develop your own counters. Each punch that your opponent throws, opens him up to a counter. With experience, you will find these openings instinctively.

The best way to gain this experience is by practicing at the gym. You cannot learn proper reactions on a heavy bag; you need a live body. Be sure to get plenty of sparring.



Another effective counter punch is a quick right hand to the body. You will slip the jab and follow up with a short right hand to the body. You can land this punch after slipping left or right. You can also effectively target the body after slipping an incoming right hand. You will slip to your left to miss the straight right hand, and follow up with a left hook to the body. Focus on digging the hook hard to the body like Micky Ward. If you have seen Micky fight, you know what I am talking about. He digs the hook up, into the body.

A good left hook to the body is brutal, but even better when you can counter with it to an unsuspecting opponent. You can then continue the combination by landing a hook to the head.

A southpaw can slip the straight right hand to his left and land a left hand to the body.

THE SHOULDER ROLL



You can generate a great deal of power when countering off a shoulder roll. As you can see in the illustration, you will roll to the right against the straight right hand. You will essentially catch the punch off your lead shoulder. You will then spring back with your own right hand. You will gain momentum and power by rolling and then returning with a straight right hand.

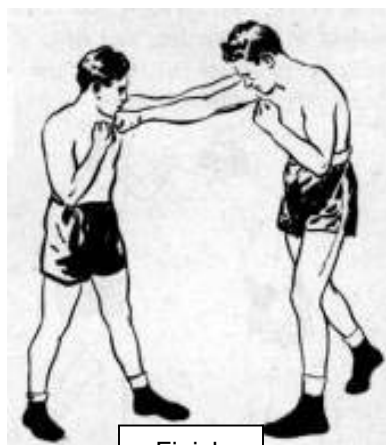
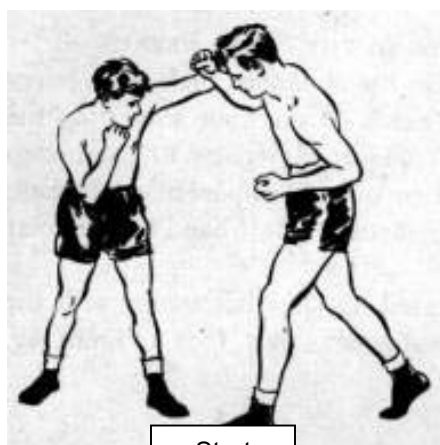
It is rare that your opponent will lead with the right hand, so look to roll after he throws a 1-2 (jab - right hand).

You can parry the jab, and then roll with the right hand. Immediately counter off your shoulder roll with a right hand and left hook. You can hurt your opponent with this technique. James Toney commonly counter punches off shoulder rolls.

He makes subtle movements on the inside to make his opponent miss, and then returns fire with brutal counter punches.

If you are a southpaw, you can shoulder roll off the lead left jab, and return with your own straight left hand.

MORE COUNTER PUNCHES



Step inside the incoming jab and throw a right hand down the middle. You will need to throw a very short, fast right hand. This counter punch can end the fight.

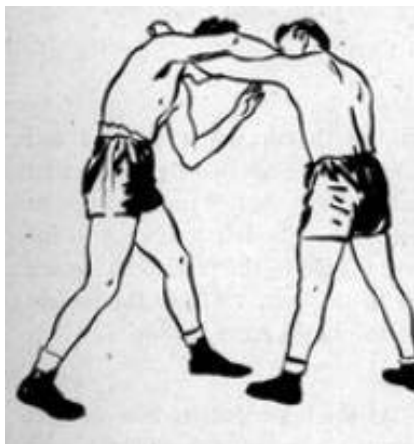
Use this counter punch sporadically. It can be very effective. You will also notice an opening for a left uppercut to the body. Mix up your counter punches, do not become predictable. A predictable fighter will not last long against an experienced boxer. Fight smart!



You can also slip the jab to your right, and throw a right hand over the jab. You will need to be quick to land this counter, but it can be very effective. This counter punch (like all others) will require timing. You need to drill these counter punches in the gym if you plan to use them in the fight.

You will need to practice these counter punches continuously, so they become automatic. If you do not practice the counters, you will never throw them instinctively.

If you think too much when countering, you will always be a split-second behind your opponent. Practice makes perfect, so spend the extra time to learn these counter punching techniques.



Another variation is to throw the right hand over the jab. You will throw your right hand at the same time as the incoming jab. Your opponent will walk into the right hand. This is one of the best counters with the right hand. You can land the right hand, and then follow up with a left hook.

A good counter puncher is one who counters with punches in bunches. Practice throwing multiple punches off each counter. If you can land 3 punches off a counter, your opponent will think twice before punching.

VARIETY!

You cannot rely on one counter punch. Your opponent will begin to expect certain counters. Mix it up throughout the bout. Boxing is similar to a chess match. You must out-think your opponent. Do not become predictable.

Just because you land a good counter does not mean you should throw it every time. Look for openings. Keep your opponent thinking and off balance.

IMPROVING THE LEAD HAND

As a conventional fighter, you will jab with the left hand. Your power will come from the right hand. The opposite is true for the southpaw who jabs with his right hand. In both cases, power comes from the rear hand. The conventional fighter throws a powerful straight right hand (right cross). The southpaw throws a powerful straight left hand (left cross).

Many young fighters “fall in love” with their power hands. They neglect the jab, instead opting to throw power punches. They load up with one or two punches at time, failing to create openings with an effective jab. Consider the March 13th bout between Shane Mosley and Winky Wright. Mosley never established an effective jab. Meanwhile, Winky continued to snap his right jab, often landing with authority, while creating openings for his left cross.

I have emphasized the importance of the jab in the past. This is nothing new to you. The jab is the most important punch in boxing. You should throw the jab often, from various angles, to the body and head.

LEAD HAND SPARRING

Although effective, the heavy bag is limited since it does not punch back. I recommend the following drill to truly develop an effective lead hand...

You can dedicate an entire round (or an entire sparring session) to the lead hand. For example, you and your sparring partner will spar without throwing the right hand (left hand for southpaws). You will be limited to throwing the jab, left hook, and lead uppercut. Mix your combinations up with the lead hand only. You can both spar with one hand, or your coach can have one fighter use both hands, while the other uses one (alternate rounds). After a few sessions, you will gain newfound control over the jab. You will appreciate the effectiveness of the lead hand.

Former title contender and well-known trainer John Scully used to have his young amateurs spar with one hand. I can remember watching Sammy Vega and Greg Cuyler (both top ranked amateurs in the 1990's - Vega was a national champion) having gym wars with one hand. Both fighters would spar with the left hand only. It was not by accident that both youngsters quickly developed whip-like jabs and left hooks. By occasionally (not all the time) sparring with one hand, they developed extremely effective lead hands.

I highly recommend an occasional sparring session with one hand. You will not need more than a few rounds per week with this drill to vastly improve the lead hand. You will learn to double up on the jab, feint with the lead hand, and dig the left hook to the body. These important skills are often neglected by beginning (and even advanced) boxers.

If you do not take the time to specifically improve the lead hand, it will not improve itself. You need to concentrate on improving the jab and hook. This drill is one of the best for achieving these objectives.

PERFECTING THE JAB

You should practice the jab on daily basis while shadow boxing and hitting the heavy bag. You should dedicate entire rounds to the most important punch in boxing (the jab!).

Assuming all fighters take the effort to perfect their jab on the heavy bag, why do so few fighters possess an effective jab?

One reason is confidence. To truly possess an effective jab, you must have confidence in the punch. Anyone can snap their jab on the heavy bag or when shadow boxing. These training techniques are important to develop proper form, but none will teach distance and timing.

The best way to develop your jab is by throwing the punch inside the ring. You need live sparring to develop this punch. You need a live body in front of you who moves in an unpredictable fashion. Sparring is critical to develop timing, accuracy, range, and confidence. The heavy bag does not move, nor does it punch. You can hit the bag without concern of counter punches. The heavy bag is excellent for conditioning, but only serves as one piece of the puzzle.

To possess an effective jab, you need more than proper technique. Once you learn to step with your jab and get your shoulder behind the punch, there is still more to it. You must develop confidence to throw the punch. When you jab, you need to jab from different angles. Don't always throw the same jab because a good fighter will time you. When I spar with Light Heavyweight John Scully, I must concentrate on his jab for all three minutes of the round. He can throw it from any position. He jabs low, then high, or high, and then low. He fakes the jab, and then throws one or two, or perhaps three. He is always mixing it up to keep me guessing and off balance. John has one of the best jabs in the business. He did not perfect this punch on the bag, he perfected it inside the ring.

It is easy to snap a jab on the bag. Once your technique is mastered, it boils down to timing and distance. You must know how far away you can land a jab. You must keep your opponent off balance with feints and angles.

The best way to develop this ability is through a combination of heavy bag work, shadow boxing, and most importantly SPARRING!

When you shadow box, you should box as if you are in the ring fighting an actual opponent.

Below, I have listed some combinations to practice:

- Jab - feint - jab
- Jab - Jab (double jab)
- Jab - jab - jab (tripe jab)
- Jab high - jab low
- Jab high - jab low - jab high
- Jab low - jab high (then add a left hook to the head or a right hand)
- Jab - hook - jab
- Jab - right hand - jab - jab

Each day you should dedicate at least two or three rounds to jabbing and feinting. A good fighter will FREEZE you with his feints. Work on feinting and then punching. Follow your feints with punches. For example, fake a jab and then step in with two hard jabs. Work this feint while sparring. After you have thrown this combination a few times, feint the jab and follow up with a left hook. Your opponent will be expecting the double jab behind the feint, but you will instead throw a left hook to the head followed by a right hand. Set your opponent up with various feints and combinations.

Another example starts with a jab to the belly. Throw a hard jab to the abdomen. This punch usually lands because most fighters do not expect it. Snap the jab to the solar plexus a few times and your opponent will take note of it. After three or four jabs to the stomach, fake a low jab, and follow with an overhand right to the head. Your opponent will be preparing to block the low jab, when you come over the top with an unexpected right hand.

These combinations can be very effective. Your opponent will have no idea what is coming next. These skills are acquired inside the ring, not on the heavy bag.

To possess an effective jab, you need confidence in your ability to land the punch. A good fighter can win an entire round with the jab. A good jab will stop your opponent from charging forward. A good jab will make your opponent hesitant to step in with combinations. When you spar, you MUST practice your jab.

AN EXAMPLE FROM A CHAMPION

Former World Champion Marlon Starling recently told me about his experience training with the legendary Eddie Futch. Marlon told me how they erased the concept of a single jab. Each time he sparred, shadow boxed, or hit the bag, he practiced throwing at least two jabs at a time. There was no such thing as a single jab inside their gym. Marlon told me that after a few weeks, he was

snapping out his double jab like never before. It became a natural reaction. He programmed himself to snap at least two hard jabs at a time. To this day, Marlon rarely throws less than two jabs at a time. During his days as a champion, Marlon was known as one of the best defensive fighters in the sport. He rarely was hit with a clean shot. One of the reasons was his ability to freeze his opponents with jabs and feints.

The moral to the story is to practice your jab inside the ring. Work on throwing multiple jabs at a time. Mix in feints with your jabs, and punch off the feints. Whether you are tall or short, the jab is the most effective punch in boxing. Use your jab regularly, whether hitting the bag or sparring inside the ring.

JABBING FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES

As you know, the jab “can” be the most effective punch inside the ring. An experienced boxer should possess the ability to jab from different angles, throwing multiple jabs and feints throughout each round to keep his opponent off balance.

Below is a new “angle” that you can work with the jab...

Jab towards your opponent’s right shoulder. This will bring your opponent’s eyes to his right, away from **your** right hand. Throw this jab a few times and observe your opponent’s reaction. This jab should not be powerful. Stick it out without too much snap. You will lull your opponent to look towards his right side.

If his eyes are moving to the right (as they often are), he will be open for a straight right hand. This “trick” is best used sporadically. This punch is rarely used, so there is a good chance you can land a punishing right hand behind the “shoulder jab”. You can literally end the fight by landing an unseen right hand.

I was hit with this punch several years ago while sparring and it caught me completely off guard. Trust me, it works...

A southpaw could jab towards the conventional fighter’s left shoulder, and then sneak the left hand down the middle.

The conventional fighter could also jab towards his opponent’s left shoulder. Your opponent will begin to look towards his left, away from your left hand. This is an ideal set up for the left hook. You can hook off the jab. When attempting this combination, start by throwing the right hand behind the jab. Your opponent will become accustomed to seeing the right hand follow the jab. You will then begin to throw the jab towards his left shoulder. He will continue to concentrate on your right hand, as his eyes become more accustomed to looking towards your right hand. This is an ideal time to sneak in a quick left hook behind your jab. You will be surprised at the effectiveness of these “trick” punches.

A LITTLE VARIETY

The most fundamental combination in boxing is the:

Left Jab - Straight Right Hand - Left Hook

All young fighters learn this combination. To the southpaws in the crowd, you would throw this combination with a right jab - straight left hand - right hook. This combination is commonly referred to as a 1-2-3 (1 = jab, 2 = straight right hand, 3 = hook).

All fighters learn this combination. You have all drilled this combination hundreds, if not thousands of times.

So, what is the problem?

There is no problem, but you must add to your arsenal. Many fighters spend 70% or more of their time on the heavy bag throwing the same combination. It is easy to throw a 1-2-3, and you look good while doing it. It may not be so easy moving to your right (or left if you are a southpaw) around the bag while punching. You may not be as fluid when hooking off the jab (jab - left hook).

It is easy to train with the combinations and movements that you can perform with ease, but how will you **IMPROVE** if you never work on the combinations and movements that are more challenging? Hooking off the jab is a dying art. Today's fighters simply do not use this combination.

If you can hook off the jab, your opponent will have much more to worry about. If you always throw the right hand after the jab, he will be able to time your punches and counter. You cannot approach the heavy bag, or an actual opponent, with a "computer" mentality. You are not programmed. You need to **THINK** when you are training. Mix it up, and incorporate variety. Instead of throwing a 1-2-3, throw a 1-3-2 (jab - left hook - straight hand). You can then follow up with a double jab, or another left hook. Always end with the left hand, so you are back in position to defend yourself.

If you can switch between 1-2-3's with 1-3-2's, your opponent will not know what punch is coming. When you make him think, you gain the advantage. Freeze him for a split second, and you can punish him. Boxing is not about winging wild punches. This is an art, a science, a chess match. Outthink your opponent, and you will outfight him.

ANOTHER GREAT COMBINATION

Another great combination that you can work off the 1-2 is the 1-2-1 or 1-2-1-1. There are two ways to throw this combination.

First, you throw a jab - right hand (1 = jab, 2 = straight right hand). After landing the right hand, your opponent is looking for the left hook. Rather than throwing the hook, you will pause for a split second, and pump a power jab down the middle. Even if the 1-2 is blocked, there is a good chance that you will land the follow up jab. Most fighters do not throw this combination. Your opponent will not be expecting another jab to come after the right hand.

Another variation involves throwing the jab **immediately** after the right hand. For this combination, you would throw 1-2-1 (or 1-2-1-1). There is no hesitation after the right hand. You immediately throw the jab (preferably two jabs) after the right hand. Emphasize speed when throwing this combination. This is not a power combination. You will catch many fighters flush with the follow up double jab. (1-2-1-1). While they are anticipating the left hook, you will land the double jab.

SUMMARY

1 = Left jab
2 = Straight right hand
3 = Left hook

- The basic beginner combination = 1-2-3
- Hook off the jab and follow up with a right hand = 1-3-2
- Hesitate for a split second, and follow up with the jab = 1-2 ... 1
- Pumping a double jab immediately after the right hand = 1-2-1-1

You need to practice these combinations on the heavy bag, on the mitts, and when sparring. If you do not practice in the gym, you will never throw these punches during an actual competition. Do not train like a "programmed" fighter. Mix it up by throwing different combinations. Keep your opponent guessing by throwing more than the traditional 1-2-3. When you start hooking off the jab, he won't know whether to expect the right hand or left hook after the jab. When you start jabbing off the right hand, he won't know whether to expect the left hook or double jab after the right hand.

FOOTWORK

How can a boxer improve his footwork?

There are many theories on this subject. I have seen several drills and different coaching styles. I've seen fighters with good footwork and others with poor footwork. I will share my thoughts on the topic of footwork and the steps necessary to improve it...

First things first, there are no magic drills that will develop fluid footwork inside the ring. I commonly browse through fitness related web sites and have seen many drills designed to improve footwork. Unfortunately, 99% of these drills (and the fitness authors who created these drills) will NOT develop proper footwork inside the ring.

Jumping rope is an excellent exercise. Yes, it will improve your physical condition and it may improve coordination between your feet and hands. The jump rope is an excellent training device. I train with it regularly...

Will the jump rope teach you to move around the ring like Ali?

NO!

There are no jumping, skipping, or bounding drills that will teach you proper footwork inside the ring. I know several athletes from other sports who use the jump rope for its conditioning benefits. These athletes are very proficient with the rope, but lack any boxing skill or footwork. These individuals are coordinated athletes, but lack the ability to punch while on the move.

Why is this so?

The answer is simple. If you want to become a better basketball player, you need to play basketball. If you want to become a better baseball player, you need to play baseball. And last but not least, if you want to become a better boxer, you need to box.

The jump rope will develop coordination, but once you become accustomed to the rope, there is much more that you must do to develop proper footwork inside the ring. The only way to develop "sport-specific" footwork is by stepping inside the ring and working on it. A good fighter should be able to throw punches while on the move. Anyone can throw punches from a stationary

position, but not everyone can throw punches while moving forward, backwards, or to the side.

You should practice footwork throughout your workout. Whether you are shadow boxing, hitting the heavy bag, hitting the double end bag, or sparring, you have an opportunity to improve footwork.

If I had a nickel for every boxer that developed bad habits on the heavy bag, I would be a rich man. Do not fall into the pattern of standing in one position throughout the round. You should be punching, or moving. As soon as you stop punching, you need to be moving. Never become a stationary target inside the ring. When you hit the bag, hit it with a plan.

Let's review a few bag drills:

Jab – Work an entire round with only the jab. Snap out single, double, and triple jabs. Jab high and jab low. Mix in feints and head movement. Circle the bag in both directions WHILE you are jabbing. Don't just move after you punch. Get used to jabbing on the move. Throw your jab from different angles. Do not allow yourself to become predictable when jabbing. You cannot throw the same jab every time. If you do, your opponent will eventually time you and set you up for a counter right hand. Mix it up and keep him guessing. Also, PRACTICE YOUR FEINTS. If you can learn to properly feint, you will keep your opponent off balance.

Roy Jones – Roy Jones is one of the best boxers of all time. Whether you are a Roy Jones fan or not, you must recognize his speed and unique ability. Try to box like Roy for a round on the bag. Stay on the outside for an entire round. Throw 3, 4, or 5 punches at a time, never less. Circle the bag throughout the round, moving in both directions, punching as you move. Stay relaxed. You cannot be fluid if you are tense.

Change Directions – If you are right handed (jab with your left), circle the bag to your right for an entire round. This will feel awkward, as you are accustomed to moving left as you jab. Mix it up and learn to punch while moving to your right.

Inside Drill – Stay on the inside for the entire round, throwing hooks and uppercuts. Slip, bob, and weave. Do not become a stationary target. Just because you are inside, does not mean you cannot side-step and pivot. Throw your combinations, then pivot left or right. Practice developing angles. Land your punches, then step to create an angle, throw another combination, and continue.

Conditioning Drill – For this drill, you will throw straight punches. After each combination, you will pivot out to your left (right if you are a southpaw). The drill will begin with 6 punches, then 4, then 2, and finally a triple jab.

For example:

- 6 punches (jab, right hand, jab, right hand, jab, right hand)
- Pivot to your left
- 4 punches (jab, right hand, jab, right hand)
- Pivot to your left
- 2 punches (jab, right hand)
- Pivot to your left
- Triple jab while circling the bag to your left
- Repeat – Starting back with the 6 punch combination

This drill is excellent for footwork as well as conditioning. You will start with a 1-2-1-2-1-2, proceed to 1-2-1-2, then 1-2, and finally 3 jabs. Continue this pattern for the entire round.

What about shadow boxing?

Shadow boxing is one of the best exercises to improve footwork. You should make a conscious effort to improve punching while on the move. Don't just sit in front of a mirror and admire your combinations. Move around the ring while you work combinations in all directions.

Last summer (2002) I visited the gym of Roy Jones Sr. (Roy's dad). Roy Sr. had his guys practice several drills that are excellent for footwork.

Jab down a line – Throw your jab all the way across the ring. When you get to the end of the ring, pivot 180 degrees and return in the opposite direction. Pivot left at one end of the ring and pivot right at the other end. You will step with your front foot, and slide the back foot behind it as you snap jabs continuously across the ring. Once you get to the end of the ring, quickly pivot off your front foot and return in the opposite direction. Work this drill for one round.

1-2-1-2 – For this drill you will throw a 1-2-1-2 (jab, straight right hand, jab, straight right hand, etc...) while moving across the ring (or down a straight line). Throw this combination non-stop as you move from one end of the ring to the other. When you get to the end, pivot 180 degrees and return in the opposite direction.

2-3-2-3 –For this drill you will throw a 2-3-2-3 (straight right hand, left hook, straight right hand, left hook, etc...) while moving across the ring (or down a

straight line). Throw this combination non-stop as you move from one end of the ring to the other. When you get to the end, pivot 180-degrees and return in the opposite direction.

Sugar Rays – This drill is named after Sugar Ray Leonard. Circle the ring in one direction while pumping the jab. Change directions every 20 or 30 seconds. Keep circling the ring for the entire round. You can also mix in some pivots at each corner of the ring. Stay loose and keep the feet moving throughout the drill. Mix in some head movement. Envision yourself as Sugar Ray Leonard. He used to float around the ring with grace. Imitate his movements.

These are just a few drills that you can perform to improve footwork.

ALWAYS be looking to create angles. This means side-stepping, pivoting, and turning your opponent. You should be punching, feinting, or moving. Do not become a stationary target. Make a conscious effort to work on these drills daily and you will soon notice the improvements.

The best way to improve footwork for boxing is by training specific to the sport. Step inside the ring and work on it!

WORKING THE BODY

With the advent of electronic scoring in amateur boxing, many fighters have been instructed to neglect body punching. Electronic scoring has become the norm since its inception during the 1992 Olympic games in Barcelona, Spain.

With electronic scoring, five judges are positioned at ringside, each with a desk-mounted keypad. A scoring blow must be clean, fair, unguarded and have the proper weight of the body or shoulder behind it. All legal blows are scored equally, regardless if they result in a knockdown. In order for a blow to be recorded, three of the five judges must press the same colored (blue corner or red corner) button within a one-second interval. The one-second interval begins when the first judge records a blow. Scores are reported based on the number of blows recognized by a majority of judges over the course of the bout.

ELECTRONIC SCORING AND BODY PUNCHING

Body punches are more difficult to score when using a blow-by-blow point system. Suppose my back is to one judge. I land an uppercut to my opponent's midsection. The judge behind me will be unable to determine if the punch landed cleanly. The judge cannot see whether my opponent blocked the punch.

Now compare a body punch to a crisp jab that snaps my opponent's head. A clean jab is easy to score. Regardless of the judge's position, he can see your opponent's head snap back upon impact.

A boxer with a good jab could realistically win an entire bout without throwing anything but the jab. Meanwhile, his opponent could work the body feverishly without receiving the points that he deserves. His punches will be too difficult to score with the electronic system.

What does this mean? Should all amateur boxers neglect the body?

NO!

Any coach who instructs his fighters to neglect the body has never been inside the ring. Just because body shots are more difficult to score on the computer, does not mean that the punches are any less effective. Very few boxers "dig" the body. It is unfortunate. Consider how successful Micky Ward became with his left hook to the body. He could literally end a fight with one body shot.

The punches may not be scoring on the computer, but they will score on your opponent's legs. A well-placed body shot will wear your opponent down. You do not need 12 rounds to effectively work the body. Mix up your attack to include body and head shots. When you neglect the body (headhunter), you become predictable, hence easier to counter punch. Mix it up and you will keep your opponent off guard.

Micky Ward was one of the best body punchers in the history of boxing. His patented combination was a left hook to the head, followed by a left hook to the body. When throwing this combination, just touch your opponent with the headshot. This punch is not thrown with power. You are simply drawing your opponent's hands up to block the hook. As soon as his hands come up, you will drop down with a left hook to the body. This is the power punch of the combination. You will be surprised how many times you land this combination inside the ring.

Another neglected punch is the jab to the body. Drop down and stick a jab to the midsection. This is not meant to be a knockout punch, but just enough to keep your opponent off guard. Here are two combinations that you can use to keep your opponent guessing...

Left jab to the body followed by an overhand right to the head – The left jab to the body will draw your opponent's attention towards guarding the body. As soon as his hands drop, you will follow up with an overhand right to the head. You cannot throw this combination too often, but it will surprise your opponent if used sporadically.

Left jab to the head, followed by a straight right to the body – Work the jab to the head and sneak in behind with a straight right hand to the body (straight left hand for our southpaws in the crowd). You can then follow up with a left hook to the head.

The straight right hand to the body is one of the most neglected punches in boxing. If timed properly, this punch can end the fight. Do not overuse the punch however, or your opponent will time you with a counter left hook. Work the straight right hand to the body off the jab.

BODY PUNCHING SUMMARY

Whether you are an amateur or professional, you will benefit from a consistent body attack. Do not neglect the body for fear that the judges will not score the punches. Body punches will pay huge dividends, regardless of the judges. A left hook to the liver is hard to shake off.

TRAIN WITH YOUR MOUTHPIECE

One of the latest buzzwords in the fitness industry is “sport-specific training”. Several new training programs are marketed as “sport-specific”. I myself use this term to describe many of my products.

An example of sport-specific training for boxing involves training around the work-to-rest ratios of competition. Our conditioning program must mimic the physical demands of boxing (2 or 3 minutes of work, followed by 1-minute of rest). Unfortunately, many fighters neglect perhaps the most sport-specific form of training...

THE MOUTHPIECE

Have you ever stepped inside the ring without your mouthpiece? Have you ever competed without a mouthpiece?

Never!

You are required to wear a mouthpiece, whether amateur or professional. Yet, for some strange reason, 99% of fighters do not train with their mouthpiece. How many fighters do you see hitting the bag while wearing their mouthpiece? What about interval training? I do not see many fighters running with their mouthpiece. One of the most common excuses I hear sounds something like this...

“If I run with my mouthpiece, I won’t get as much oxygen, and I’ll get tired...”

Exactly!

Remember, we are training to fight, not to become Track and Field athletes. You must become accustomed to training the anaerobic energy systems with all-out intensity, WHILE wearing your mouthpiece. If you never train with a mouthpiece, how can you expect it to “feel natural” when you are inside the ring. Train yourself to breathe with the mouthpiece, even when completely exhausted.

It will happen in a real fight, so prepare yourself at the gym. Do not save your mouthpiece for sparring. You should wear your mouthpiece when hitting the bag, the mitts, and even when shadow boxing. Make it second nature to train with your mouthpiece.

STAYING LOOSE

“Ross, I’ve been running intervals, hitting the bag, and working through several conditioning drills. Why do I get so tired when I spar...”

I am asked this question each month. Fighters cannot understand what causes their fatigue. They run hard, train hard, and follow a proper nutritional program. Why the heck are they running out of gas?

FIGHTING SHAPE

“Fighting shape” is different from general fitness. There are no fitness tests that measure your ability to fight hard each round. An athlete may be in supreme physical condition, but run out of gas after one round of sparring.

Interval training and anaerobic conditioning routines are excellent for boxers. These drills train the energy systems used during competition. Unfortunately, this form of training is just one piece of a much more complicated puzzle...

We are not training for Track and Field. We are training to fight. You cannot prepare for this sport without stepping inside the ring with another opponent. You can sit in front of the heavy bag until the sun comes up, and it will never punch back. You can throw punches without concern of your opponent’s attack. Many fighters enter the ring and tighten up. They begin to circle the ring while holding an isometric contraction. The muscles remain tight, under constant tension. Within a few minutes, the fighter is completely worn out. It is physically exhausting to box while your muscles are flexed tight.

You must stay relaxed inside the ring. When your body tightens, you expend valuable energy causing premature fatigue. Interval training will not teach you to stay relaxed as your opponent unleashes 4-punch combinations in your direction.

The best way to prepare for this situation involves stepping inside the ring to spar (and compete). You must develop confidence in your defensive abilities. You must be able to stand in front of your opponent (within punching range) without tensing the muscles. When you are relaxed, your movements become more fluid. Your punches will be faster and more difficult to counter.

We had a Track and Field sprinter who was training at our gym last summer. He could run 10 x 400-meter intervals without any problems. He averaged 55 seconds or less per 400, which is pretty damn fast. According to his interval training capabilities, this young man was in tremendous shape. His anaerobic systems were highly trained.

In his first day sparring, he entered the ring with an amateur boxer who had eight fights. The Track and Field athlete was in far superior shape in terms of interval training and conditioning drills.

What happened?

Within 2 rounds, the Track and Field runner was COMPLETELY exhausted. He was breathing out of his mouth, struggling to hold his gloves up for protection. I took him out of the ring after just 2 rounds. He resembled a person who had never exercised before...

He couldn't believe the fatigue that he experienced. A few days earlier he was laughing at the other fighters who could not keep up with him on the track. We all know the old saying about payback...

So, what is the moral to this story?

You need more than track workouts and conditioning drills to get into fight shape. You must learn to remain relaxed, even during the most heated exchanges inside the ring. You must develop the poise to stand directly in front of your opponent, slipping incoming punches, and returning with combinations of your own.

NO SECRETS

There are no secrets to developing this poise. The only way to develop this ability is with fast-paced sparring. You must train inside the ring. The heavy bag will never punch back.

Your training program must integrate conditioning drills WITH sparring. Do not focus 100% of your energy towards either objective. A complete fighter must follow a complete training program. You cannot spar every day without burning out. For this reason, you must balance sparring with conditioning drills, skill training, interval training, and more.

HITTING THE MITTS

Focus mitt work is perhaps the most valuable form of skill training. An experienced trainer can improve several aspects of your game while holding the mitts. You can learn new combinations, practice defense (slipping, blocking, parrying, weaving, etc.), and perfect technique.

Unfortunately, many coaches are working the mitts incorrectly. These coaches smother incoming punches, doing as much work as the fighter. This is a mistake. If you are holding the mitts, let the punches come to you. This will ensure proper extension from your boxers. Do not cut their punches off by reducing the distance required for each punch.

Proper mitt work can improve a fighter's range. If you smother the boxer's punches, you will hamper his ability to gauge range. Remember, boxing is largely a sport of range. You must know exactly how far away you must be to land a punch. This may sound easy on paper, but is much more difficult inside the ring. Learning to gauge timing, range, and distance are acquired skills that take time to learn. Do not take two steps backward for every step forward by holding the mitts incorrectly.

Let your fighter achieve full extension. This will ensure proper technique. Hitting the mitts is not meant to be theatrical production. Many fighters are more concerned with "looking good" on the mitts, instead of improving a particular skill.

Below are a few recommendations when holding the mitts:

- If your fighter drops his right hand when jabbing with the left, slap him with a left hook (open hand with the mitt). This may sound "barbaric" but it will teach your fighter to keep his hands up. Find the openings and make him pay for it. He will thank you on fight night.
- If your fighter drops his jab after striking the mitt, follow his hand back with a right hand. Remember, the left jab should start and end by the face. There is no in between. If his hand drops after impact, he will be open for a counter right hand. Remind him while holding the mitts.
- Work on reaction punches while holding the mitts. For example, throw a left hook with an open mitt to your fighter's right ear. His hand should be up to block the incoming left hook. As soon as the mitt touches his hand,

he should immediately throw a straight right hand. This is a “reaction punch”. As soon as the fighter feels the hook land, he should throw a right hand down the middle. Follow up with a left hook.

- Southpaws can counter the left hook with a right hook, followed by a straight left hand.
- Another common reaction punch is to throw a looping right hand to your fighters left side. As soon as the right hand touches his hand, he should return with a quick left hook. Finish with a right hand, and another left hook. These punches are extremely effective when fighting on the inside. You can land these punches over and over again (assuming that you drill these combinations at the gym).
 - Southpaws can counter with a short left hand, followed by a right hook.
- Another reaction punch that can be drilled with the mitts is the right hand that reacts over the left jab. The coach should jab with his left mitt. The boxer will parry/catch the left jab (with his right hand), and return with a right hand to the coach’s right hand mitt. The parry/counter punch happens in one fluid movement. Follow up with a left hook.
 - Southpaws can counter with a right jab, followed by a straight left hand.

These are just a few reaction punches that you can use. Throw a minimum of two punches after each reaction.

FINDING YOUR STYLE

I have received several questions from novice boxers who want advice on finding their style. Should they box from the outside? Should they fight with their hands down? Should they fight on the inside like Joe Frazier?

Finding a style that suits your needs involves much more than picking a style out of a hat. You should not “pick” a style. Your boxing style must evolve to fit your specific needs, abilities, talents, character, personality, and mentality. Any coach who instills the exact style on each of his fighters is doing a disservice. What works for me, may not work for you, and vice versa.

Consider former Junior Welterweight Micky Ward. Micky could not box on the outside like Roy Jones or Muhammad Ali. Micky fought on the inside, often winning his bouts through superior conditioning and determination. Micky was not a “slick” boxer, but he was extremely effective. His style was a perfect match for his physical and mental attributes.

I see many young boxers trying to imitate Roy Jones. Unfortunately, many of these athletes lack the ability (both natural and acquired) to successfully employ this style. Roy Jones is an amazing athlete. It does not make sense to imitate Roy Jones. You must find a style that best suits your needs and abilities.

As mentioned, many coaches make the mistake of instilling the exact style on each boxer they train. Others teach styles based purely on physical attributes. For example, a short boxer walks into the gym and is automatically instructed to fight on the inside. This is a mistake. Consider past greats such as Pernell Whitaker and Buddy McGirt.

Pernell Whitaker was one of the greatest Welterweights of all time. He was a world champion at only 5' 6" tall. Despite his lack of height, Pernell was one of the slickest boxers to ever compete inside the ring. His defensive abilities were amazing. Pernell did not fight on the inside like Micky Ward. Pernell was a pure “boxer”. He was slick, elusive, and extremely effective.

Buddy McGirt is another perfect example. At only 5'6", he was also a world champion in the Welterweight division. He was a highly skilled boxer. He could box on the outside, or bang on the inside. He was a true technician inside the ring.

What about boxing with your hands down?

Many boxers such as Roy Jones and Zab Judah box with their hands down. Young boxers see these athletes with their hands down and attempt to imitate this style.

Does it make sense to box with your hands down?

The answer to this question is simple. It only makes sense to box with your hands down if it improves you as a fighter. In most cases, it will not improve your boxing ability. It will leave you open to numerous counter punches. Roy Jones has amazing reaction abilities. He is naturally gifted. Most athletes have not been blessed with this natural ability.

Keep the hands up to ensure proper defense. If you drop the hands, only do so on the outside when out of harm. When you return to punching range, keep the hands up to defend against incoming punches.

Let your style develop itself. You do not "choose" a style on your first day at the gym. It must evolve in time. Let it happen naturally. Don't force a style onto yourself. Let your style evolve to suit your abilities, temperament, and mentality.

SOMETHING TO TRY

In the past, I've mentioned the importance of shadow boxing, not just as a warm-up, but also a valuable skill training exercise. Unfortunately, many boxers continue to "BS" their way through their shadow boxing sessions.

Below is a link to an article from **Ringside.com** that reiterates many of the points that I have expressed in the past regarding the value of shadow boxing:

Shadow Boxing - By George Smith

http://www.ringside.com/articles/archives/coaches_corner/shadowboxing.htm

Here is something that I recommend for the next month...

Start each morning with 4 rounds of shadow boxing. Each round will be 3-minutes, with 30-60 seconds of rest between rounds. If you use 60-second rest periods, you will need 15 minutes to perform this brief routine. Here are a few things to work on during this 4-round session:

- Multiple punch combinations (3 or more punches per combination)
- Work on new combinations
- Work the jab from different angles
- Head movement and footwork (ex. establish angles, pivot, side-step, etc.)

If you are running in the morning, perform this 15-minute routine before your roadwork. If you cannot find time, **make time** by setting your alarm clock 15-minutes early. If you do this every day for 1-month (a 31-day month), you will have performed an additional 124 rounds of shadow boxing. During this time, you will have spent 372 minutes shadow boxing (6.2 hours). An extra 6 hours of continuous footwork and combination punching has obvious benefits. You are sure to improve some aspect of your game.

Note - This brief session should not replace your shadow boxing requirement at the gym during your evening workout. You should still perform the exact shadow boxing session that you are performing now.

DOUBLE-END BAG

The double-end bag is one of the most effective training tools for boxers (if used correctly). Regular practice with the double-end bag will generate improvements in hand-eye coordination and timing. You can practice head movement, slipping and weaving, footwork, combination punching, and more.

As you strike the double-end bag, it will rebound back and forth in an unpredictable fashion. You will be forced to move, react, and punch. This bag will develop lightning quick reactions. Unlike the heavy bag, it will move away from you with each strike. You will then be forced to adjust and react to land multiple punches.



The rebounding motion of the bag will simulate the action of an actual opponent. For example, you can throw a double-jab, and then “slip” the bag as it rebounds towards you like an opponent. This bag is excellent for head movement. You will be forced to move your head. If not, the bag will smack you between the eyes!

When striking the double-end bag, do not fasten the cords too tightly. A common mistake in many gyms is to use extremely tight bungee cords when attaching the double-end bag. Consequently, the bag does not move following impact. The cords are too tight for the bag to rebound back and forth. It essentially stays still due to the tightly stretched cords.

Many boxers prefer the cords to be tight for obvious reasons. The bag is much easier to hit when the cords are tied tightly. This defeats the purpose of the bag. You are not punching the double-end bag to develop power. You can use the heavy bag for this objective. The double-end bag is designed to improve hand-eye coordination. The bag must rebound and move to fulfill this objective. The double-end bag is supposed to be hard to hit. A difficult bag will provide maximum benefits to the aspiring boxer.

When starting out with the double-end bag, concentrate on the jab. Jab the bag twice, and then respond to the rebounding bag by slipping or weaving out of the

way. Eventually, you can add a straight right hand (left hand for southpaws). You can then add uppercuts, and finally hooks. Hooks are the most difficult punch to land, as they cause the bag to rebound sideways. It is very difficult to land a *left jab - right hand - left hook - right hand* combination to the double-end bag. As soon as you land the left hook, the bag will rebound sideways. You will need precise timing to land the follow-up right hand.

Do not become frustrated when using the double-end bag. It is supposed to be challenging. Remain calm, focusing on speed, NOT power. You should not try to hit the double-end bag as hard as possible. Rather, you must remain in control, throwing swift punches, while constantly moving the head.

This bag will teach you to punch with speed while remaining relaxed. Do not tense up when hitting the bag. You must stay relaxed to throw punches with optimal speed.

Many young fighters want to learn a magical exercise to improve hand speed. There is no such thing. One of the most important elements of hand speed is the ability to remain relaxed, so you can “snap” your punches out like a whip. If you tense up inside the ring, you will lose speed and power. Stay relaxed and let the hands flow. The double-end bag will develop this ability.

I recommend a regular dose of double-end work. You can hit the double-end bag for several rounds without soreness. You can even hit the double-end bag as a warm-up prior to a weight training session. By doing so, you will kill two birds with one stone. You will warm-up for the strength training session, while also developing and improving upon your current skill set.

Use the double-end bag often. It is one of the best tools you can use.

REVERSING ROLES

One of the most common heavy bag drills is to finish the last 30 seconds of the round with an all-out burst of non-stop punches. Many timers have a signal which indicates the last 30 seconds of the round. When this bell sounds off, you begin to punch all-out for the remainder of the round. This is an excellent drill, as it teaches you to finish each round strong.

The limitation to this drill is that during your final burst of energy (the last 30 seconds), your legs remain stationary. You assume your fighting stance and unleash non-stop punches for 30 seconds.

Let's reverse roles by modifying this drill. Rather than finishing the round with an all-out burst, you will start the round with an all-out burst. After throwing the all-out burst of punches, you will finish the round by "boxing". You will circle the bag, while snapping the jab and throwing 3 or 4 punch combinations. After each combination, you will continue to circle the bag, snapping double and triple jabs throughout the round.

This drill will teach you to use your legs, even after expending a tremendous amount of energy. As we all know, the legs become tired after several rounds of intense action. As the legs fatigue, you begin to stand in front of your opponent, rather than using the entire ring. This drill will teach you to continue boxing, even after a heated exchange.

Remember, boxing is an art. A skilled boxer can use the entire ring, moving and punching in all directions.

SAMPLE ROUTINES

2-Minute Rounds - Beginner:

- 30-seconds of all-out punching
- Finish the round by boxing and circling the bag

2-Minute Rounds - Advanced:

- 1-minute of all-out punching
- Finish the round by boxing and circling the bag

3-Minute Rounds - Advanced:

- 1-minute of all-out punching

- Finish the round by boxing and circling the bag

During the “all-out” portion the drill, you should throw straight punches. Throw a non-stop 1-2-1-2-1-2... (1 = jab 2 = straight right hand). Southpaws will throw a right jab + straight left hand.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Another option is to start with 3 rounds where you begin each round with an all-out flurry. You can then finish with 3 rounds where you begin by boxing, and finish with an all-out flurry. By working both drills together, you will reap the benefits of boxing while fatigued, and punching while fatigued.

3 x 3-Minute Rounds (Start Strong)

- Start with 30-seconds of all-out punching
- Finish the round by boxing and circling the bag

3 x 3-Minute Rounds (Finish Strong)

- Start by circling the bag, throwing combinations
- Finish the round with 30-seconds of all out punching

After 6 rounds, you will have performed much more than a “traditional” heavy bag routine.

BAD HABITS

Many fighters develop bad habits on the heavy bag. Before I discuss one of these bad habits, I would like to remind the coaches who read this newsletter...

Observe your fighters when they are hitting the bag. I have been in more gyms than I can remember where the "coaches" pay no attention to their boxers while they swing wildly on the bag. As a trainer, I realize that we will be working with several athletes at one time. Even so, it is the responsibility of the coach to keep an eye on his fighters while they are training on the bags. Correct mistakes and reinforce proper technique. Many fighters are developing bad habits in the gym, simply because no one takes the time to observe them hitting the bag.

Ok, enough of my rant. Let's talk about a bad habit, often developed on the bag.

What is the name of this sport?

Boxing!

Boxing involves moving around a ring. I have never seen a boxing ring that was as small as a telephone booth. So why do certain fighters hit the bag as if they were inside a telephone booth? They neglect movement, instead loading up on power punches with no regard to footwork, angles, and defense.

For example, you throw a hard combination and then regroup. You throw another combination, and then regroup...

The problem is that you never use your feet. Your feet remain stationary as you fire away on the bag.

What is wrong with this style of bag training?

Without realizing it, you are training yourself to remain stationary **after** throwing a combination. This is a MISTAKE that you will bring to the ring. You will become flat footed inside the ring. You will punch, and then stand still. You may as well put a big target on your head that says PUNCH ME!

You should be punching, moving, feinting, defending, setting up angles, and so on. You should NOT be standing still (doing nothing). You should be moving your feet, or moving your head. Incorporate some upper body movement. Don't stand still like a punching bag.

A HUMAN PUNCHING BAG

If you remain stationary after punching, it is very easy to devise a strategy against you. Your opponent will cover up while you punch. As soon as you stop punching, your opponent will immediately respond with a combination of his own. You become a sitting duck when you fail to move after punching. If you do not plan to throw another combination, you should move. If you are not punching, you have no business standing still without movement.

It is frustrating being hit, but even more so when you are unable to respond with any punches of your own. This happens when an effective boxer punches and then moves. He gets his combinations off, and then sidesteps or turns you to develop a new angle. Meanwhile, you are left hitting air, while he lands combinations from all directions.

Do not drill this one-dimensional pattern into your head by standing like a statue in front of the heavy bag.

“BOX” THE BAG!

When you hit the bag, you need to BOX the bag. Throw combinations and then MOVE. Move left AND right. Practice feinting, sidestepping, combinations, and upper body movement. Do not become a stationary target.

You will notice that it is much more difficult to constantly move around the bag. It is easy when you are standing still. It becomes much more tiring when you start to use your legs. Bad habits are very difficult to break. Do yourself a favor and THINK when you are hitting the bag. Use the bag to practice new skills. Whether or not you are an inside fighter or an outside fighter, you must fight from angles. Do not stand directly in front of the bag. Practice the skills that you will use inside the ring.

There is a place for conditioning drills and a place for skill development. If you never work on skill development, your conditioning will be useless. Who cares if you can hit a bag nonstop for an entire round if you can never hit your opponent? Your opponent will not stand still like a heavy bag. Your opponent will move and punch back. We always hear the word “sport-specific” training. Make your heavy bag sessions “sport-specific”. Hit the bag as if you were boxing an actual opponent.

A THIRD EYE

When boxing, it is important to rely on your trainer's feedback between rounds. You cannot see yourself inside the ring. A good coach should serve as a third eye. He can see when you drop your hands, or fail to capitalize on your opponent's openings. Your coach should focus 100% of his attention towards **you** during competition.

What about at the gym?

You may train at a boxing gym with 20 or 30 other fighters. Your coach can only do so much with each fighter. He cannot stand by your side during each minute of training. When you are sparring, your coach will be working with two fighters (you and your sparring partner). His attention is often split between both fighters. This scenario is common in boxing gyms.

In addition, while others are sparring, you may be on your own while hitting the heavy bag. You may develop bad habits without realizing it. How do you overcome this "problem"?

A VIDEO CAMERA

Consider major sports such as basketball, football, soccer, and baseball. Coaches and athletes are known to review videotapes of opposing teams. The use of videotape is rare in the sport of boxing. When most fighters think of videotape, they envision studying tapes of their opponents. It is also common to watch past champions with the hope of learning. Both practices are useful and recommended.

With that said, most fighters and coaches are "missing the boat" regarding the most effective use of videotape. It is rare that you will have videotape to review of future opponents, particularly in the amateur ranks. This luxury is typically limited to top-level professionals, whose opponents have boxed on national television.

WORRY ABOUT YOURSELF

Although rarely used, you can benefit from a video camera each day that you train. Tape **YOURSELF** when you are sparring, working the heavy bag, and even when shadow boxing inside the ring. Study the tapes. You can learn a lot by watching yourself.

I recently videotaped a young amateur boxer while he was hitting the heavy bag. The youngster had an awful habit of dropping his right hand whenever he jabbed with the left. This is a common problem with many beginners. As the left jab is extended, the right hand should remain close to the ear to defend against counter left hooks. Many beginners drop the right hand by their shoulder, leaving themselves open for brutal counter punches.

I informed the young boxer of his bad habit, but he continued to repeat the mistake. When he saw his mistake on video (through his own eyes), he realized how susceptible he was to a counter left hook. He needed to SEE the mistake before he could correct it.

Many athletes learn with their eyes. They need to see themselves in action to truly understand their mistakes. This is particularly true when sparring. You will be amazed at some of the things you notice when watching yourself in action. You will see obvious mistakes and openings that you did not capitalize on. By watching the tape, it is easier for you to recognize those areas in need of improvement.

On the flip side, you will also observe those things that you are doing correctly. This is an excellent way to develop confidence. Watching yourself in action opens up an entirely new learning experience. It is one thing to listen to your coach, but another to actually see what he is referring to with your own eyes.

I highly recommend videotaping your sparring sessions (and actual bouts). You should also record an occasional heavy bag and shadow boxing session. You will see certain areas that you can improve upon. Save the videotapes of prior sparring matches and competitions. You can then chart your progress by observing yourself in action.

You can find a quality camcorder for less than \$300. I highly recommend this investment in YOURSELF. After watching each tape, write down at least one thing that you could (and should) improve upon in a future sparring session (or bout). Also, write down at least one thing that you did well. Don't be too hard on yourself. We all do good and bad things inside the ring. Each sparring session provides an opportunity to improve some aspect of your game. The videotape can help you pinpoint the specific areas in need of improvement.

THE FORGOTTEN UPPERCUT

Former World Champion Thomas Hearns was known for his brutal knockout power. He possessed one of the most lethal right hands in the history of boxing. On June 15th 1984, Hearns destroyed Roberto Duran with one of the most devastating single punch knockouts ever witnessed inside the ring.

Former World Champion Felix 'Tito' Trinidad was also known for devastating power. Trinidad possessed one of the best left hooks in boxing. He threw the punch with precision and speed. His hook was short, compact, and loaded with power.

Why am I telling you this information?

Great question!

When we think of a "power puncher", we automatically assume that he has possesses a devastating straight right hand or left hook (or for the southpaws in the crowd, a straight left hand or right hook). No one ever stops to say, *"Wow, Johnny really throws a powerful uppercut..."*

The uppercut is one of the most neglected punches in boxing. Many young boxers "fall in love" with their right hand. They load up on the right hand (cross), often swinging wildly, hitting nothing but air.

The young boxer automatically assumes that he must throw the straight right hand (cross) to score a knockout. The result is a wild bout lacking skill and style. This is a common scenario for many novice boxers.

Eventually, the boxer must develop (and apply) a more comprehensive arsenal. He cannot rely on one or two punches. He must learn to use both hands, throwing punches in bunches, and attacking from angles.

Many fighters work their way inside behind the jab, but do not follow up with effective combinations. The fighter will follow the jab inside, and then clinch with his opponent. If he does not clinch, he will often smother himself against his opponent, leaving no room for effective combination punching.

This fighter expends energy going inside (by jabbing his way in), but fails to exploit his position on the inside. It is not beneficial to step inside, if you fail to throw effective punches once you are there.

The uppercut is perhaps the most effective (and dangerous) punch on the inside. If you plan to fight on the inside, you must make use of the uppercut.

COMBINATIONS

The uppercut is most useful on the inside (when you are at close range with your opponent). You should never lead with an uppercut from the outside. If you lead with an uppercut from the outside, you are asking to be hit with a devastating counter punch.

For example, if you were to lead with a right hand uppercut, you will leave yourself wide open for a counter left hook. Save the uppercut for the inside. You can work your way inside with the jab, and then follow up with a compact combination. Three of my personal favorites on the inside include the following (southpaws will throw the opposite hand):

1. Left Hook – Right Uppercut – Left Hook
2. Right Uppercut – Left Hook – Right Uppercut
3. Right Uppercut – Left Hook – Straight Right Hand – Left Hook

Each of these combinations can be used effectively inside. You should not throw these punches when boxing on the outside. First, you must work your way inside. For example, throw two jabs and step in behind the jab. This will leave you in position to land the uppercut.

You can also mix up the left hook to the body and head. For those familiar with former Jr. Welterweight Micky Ward, you are aware of his double left hook, which he started to the head and finished at the body. The left hook to the head is not meant to be a knockout punch. This punch draws your opponent's hands up, while you follow up with a hard left hook to the body. Micky Ward became famous for this combination. His left hook to the liver sent many boxers crashing to the canvas.

We can add this combination to our uppercut. Here is a great combination that you can use:

- Jab – Jab – Right Uppercut – Left Hook (head) – Left Hook (body)

You start by jabbing your way inside. You will then continue with a right uppercut, followed by a left hook to the head. Finish by digging the left hook to the body.

As you can see, the possibilities are endless. There are an infinite number of combinations that you can develop and use inside the ring.

Thus far, we have always followed the right uppercut with a left hook. If you were a southpaw, you would follow the left uppercut with a right hook. The hook and uppercut naturally flow together. These two punches complement each other on the inside.

MIXING IT UP

It is common to follow the right uppercut with a left hook. If you put this combination on “auto-pilot”, your opponent will eventually become accustomed to defending against it. For this reason, it is important to mix things up, to keep him off guard.

Start by throwing a right uppercut on the inside (you are already inside). As soon as the punch lands, you will take a mini-step to your right. The total distance covered with this step should be minimal. You are simply trying to establish an angle. You will then follow with a straight right hand and left hook. The mini-step you take will establish the angle to land this two-punch combination. The initial uppercut is thrown as a distraction, not a power punch. You are simply throwing this punch to create an opening (and angle) for the right hand - left hook.

- Right Uppercut
- Side step to your right (small, fast step)
- Straight Right Hand - Left Hook

When your opponent sees the right uppercut, he is automatically assuming that you will follow with the left hook. You will throw him off guard by taking a quick step to the right. Do not overuse this combination, but it is very effective when timed properly.

A GREAT COUNTER PUNCH

Earlier, I discussed the uppercut as an effective counter punch against the jab. One example involved slipping the jab to your right, and following with a right uppercut to your opponent's chin.

You can also use the uppercut as an effective counter punch against a southpaw. You can slip his straight left hand to your right, and then follow with a counter right uppercut. The southpaw will often begin with the right jab. You can catch

or parry the jab with your lead left hand. As the southpaw then follows with his straight left hand (behind the jab), you will slip to the right and throw a powerful uppercut under his chin.

A southpaw can also use this counter punch. The southpaw can parry the conventional fighter's jab with his right hand. He can then slip the incoming straight right hand to his left, and counter with a left uppercut.

This counter punch is effective, and often unexpected.

You can also use the right uppercut to counter punch a wild "hooker" (someone who throws a lot of left hooks). You will keep your right hand by your ear to guard against the left hook. Don't throw this counter punch right away. Let your opponent get comfortable throwing the hook. Block the hook with your right hand to avoid punishment. Your opponent will become comfortable throwing the hook. This is when you can catch him off guard with a counter right uppercut. As soon as the hook touches your glove, dig a fast uppercut to his chin. He will be wide open for this punch.

This counter punch is also effective when thrown to the body. If you can dig an uppercut to your opponent's solar plexus, you can often end the fight. This punch will leave your opponent gasping for air. Do not become a headhunter with the uppercut. Mix it up by digging to the solar plexus.

DO NOT SMOTHER YOURSELF

While discussing the uppercut, it is important to discuss the concept of "range" on the inside. Typically, when we hear the word "range", we automatically assume range on the outside. How much distance is necessary to land the jab?

A traditional drill involves extending your lead arm out until it touches the heavy bag. You then take a step backwards and this is your range with the jab. As you step forward and extend the punch, you compensate for the step that you have taken away from the bag. This common drill teaches range on the outside, which is important when establishing your jab.

With this said, it is equally important to learn "range" on the inside. Many fighters make the mistake of smothering themselves on the inside, leaving no room to punch.

Suppose you follow a double jab inside. You are now positioned directly in front of your opponent. Do not make the mistake of going chest-to-chest with him. If

you get this close, there is no room to punch. You must leave space to throw your punches effectively.

There will also be situations when your opponent comes forward to smother your punches. During this situation, you can take a half step backward, and follow up with an uppercut to the chin. The half step back will give you just enough room to land the punch.

This half step can be particularly effective following a slight "lull" in the action. Many bouts consist of furious exchanges, followed by brief rest periods by both fighters. For example, there will be situations when your opponent is content with tying up on the inside. He will hold and clinch in an effort to catch a quick breather. This is a perfect opportunity to catch him "sleeping" by stepping back and firing a right uppercut up the middle. This subtle step backwards will give you just enough room to punch.

ANGLES

Another combination can be developed off a clinch. For example, suppose you and your opponent are "tied up" on the inside. You are essentially chest-to-chest, with no room to punch. You will take your right hand, and put it behind your opponent's left shoulder. You will then pull him towards you and to your left. This is a subtle move, which is performed with an open glove. It takes place with one quick motion.

As you are turning your opponent, you will also take a slight step to your right. Your opponent ends up going to the left, as you take a short step to your right. When stepping to your right, your body should also pivot towards your opponent (to your left). If you do not pivot in his direction, you will not have an angle to punch.

This entire sequence takes place in a split second. This is not a punch that you can use all the time, but it will be very effective when used sparingly. You can follow the right hand with a left hook. These two punches will land with a high percentage rate if used properly.

To wrap things up, fighting on the inside involves much more than simply throwing wild haymakers. Just because you are inside, does not mean that your technique should be abandoned. You can establish angles on the inside, and capitalize from these angles. You should not stand directly in front of your opponent for long. Turn him, side step, and work the angles.

UPPERCUTS WITH THE LEAD HAND

Thus far, I have discussed the right uppercut (left uppercut for southpaws). You can also throw an uppercut with your lead hand (conventional = left hand, southpaw = right hand). This punch should not be thrown with “knockout” intentions. Rather, the lead hand uppercut is a surprise punch that you can use to set up a more powerful straight right hand.

Earlier, I discussed the effectiveness of hooking off the jab. You can use a similar combination by replacing the left hook with a left uppercut to the chin...

Left Jab - Left Uppercut - Right Hand

With this combination, the left uppercut is a short punch. It does not travel far. This punch is thrown quickly off the jab. This punch is designed to lift your opponent's chin. You should then follow up (immediately) with a straight right hand. The right hand is the power punch for this combination. The jab and uppercut are thrown with speed. Lift his chin, and then punish him with the right hand.

When throwing the lead uppercut, you must minimize the distance of this punch. Do not drop your hand down by your waist when throwing this uppercut. If you “wind up” with the punch, you will be open for a counter right hand.

If you can hook off your jab with effectiveness, you can really mix things up with this punch. Your opponent will not see the short uppercut coming. He will expect either a straight right hand or left hook to come after the jab. You will surprise many fighters with a quick lead hand uppercut off the jab. This combination will leave you in a position to land a huge right hand.

Use this punch sparingly. It is excellent when timed correctly. You will leave your opponent in a perfect position for your right hand.

HEAVY BAG TRAINING REVISITED

One of the most common questions that I receive reads as follows...

"Ross, what are some great heavy bag drills?"

Many fighters are searching for new "innovative" bag drills. I encourage the enthusiasm.

I have discussed several bag drills in past editions of this newsletter, as well as those listed in **The Boxer's Guide**. With that said, you should not always view bag work as a "drill". Inside the ring, you will not perform a structured drill against your opponent. Boxing is much more complicated than a mindless drill. You must "think" inside the ring. This means making adjustments based on your opponent's style.

Different bag drills serve different purposes. For example, the **10 x 10 System** (page 90) is excellent for anaerobic endurance. I highly recommend the drill, but this drill alone will not "teach" you how to box. It is one thing to develop anaerobic endurance, but much different to apply this endurance (and power) in a useful manner.

What good is it to throw 300 punches per round if you cannot land three punches against an actual opponent?

You must make time for "freestyle" work on the heavy bag and punch mitts. Each round must not be a "drill". There are times when you should simply "box" the heavy bag. Work various combinations, move left and right, move the head, and feint. Think as you would in an actual bout. Box the bag as if it were an unpredictable opponent.

Your coach may call out combinations on the punch mitts, but he will not call out the combinations that you throw during an actual bout. You must think for yourself. One of the best ways to develop this ability is to work the heavy bag without the structure of a pre-defined drill. Integrate combination punching, footwork, and head movement to create your own "drill".

This will teach you to put the pieces together on your own. You must learn to think for yourself in this sport.

THE FUNDAMENTALS

Another common question that I receive is...

"Ross, what are some good combinations to practice on the bag?"

Once again, this is a great question. There are numerous combinations that you can practice on the bag and inside the ring when sparring. I listed several effective combinations in *The Boxer's Guide*. We have discussed additional combinations in several editions of this newsletter.

One thing that I would like to emphasize though is the importance of the fundamentals. Do not get "too fancy" with your combination punching. It is rare that a fighter will land more than 2 or 3 consecutive punches. Many fighters neglect the fundamentals, instead opting for combinations that are more complex (and often less effective).

Do not be so eager to work on complex combinations until you have mastered the fundamentals. A few combinations that you should master include the following (1=jab, 2=cross, 3=hook):

- 1-2 (jab – cross)
- 1-1-2 (jab – jab – cross)
- 1-2-1-2 (jab- cross – jab – cross)
- 1-2-3 (jab – cross – hook)

A good fighter should throw a lightning fast 1-2. You need to throw the 1-2 with technical mastery. There can be no wasted movement. The punches must be compact, precise, relaxed, fast, and powerful. The 1-1-2 is of equal importance. This is an excellent combination to fall back on when fatigued. You should always be able to throw this combination with speed and accuracy. Don't load up with the punches, stay relaxed and let the hands flow.

Both punches of the 1-2 combination should hit the heavy bag almost simultaneously. The cross needs to follow directly behind the jab. The purpose of the combination is to distract your opponent with the jab and follow up with an immediate cross. Many fighters throw the jab, and then wind up with the right hand (left hand for southpaws). Consequently, the cross lags far behind the jab. The fighter "thinks" he is throwing the punch harder, but actually loses all of his power by telegraphing the punch.

When you throw the cross, it should be thrown down a straight, direct path. The hand should start by the face, and fire directly towards your opponent. Excess

movement, such as flaring the elbows, will detract from speed and power. Keep the punch compact. Don't load up. It may not feel as powerful, but trust me, it will be much more effective.

I highly recommend a regular dose of the "fundamentals". You will be surprised how much you can do with nothing more than a firm grasp of the fundamentals. A solid double jab and 1-2 can take you a long way. Do not be so concerned about adding complex combinations to your arsenal.

We can use a mathematical principle to show the importance of the fundamentals...

In 1906, an Italian economist named Vilfredo Pareto devised a theory known as the **Pareto Principle**, commonly referred to as the **80-20 Rule**. His theory came from an observation that twenty percent of the people in his country owned eighty percent of the wealth. Many business managers use the Pareto Principle in the office. The Pareto Principle reminds you to focus on the 20 percent that matters. In theory, the principle says to focus on the 20 percent who produce 80 percent of your results.

Although this theory was not intended for boxing, you can apply it to the *Sweet Science*. Twenty percent of the combinations that you throw could very well produce 80 percent of your results. You may throw several elaborate combinations, but very few will be as effective as the fundamentals.

I do not want to discourage you from adding new tools to your arsenal. Just do not lose focus of the fundamentals. Make time to practice the jab and the 1-2. A stinging jab and lightning quick 1-2 are valuable attributes that many fighters lack. They move on to new aspects of their game without mastering the fundamentals. Do not make this mistake. Rome was not built in one day. Boxers are no different. It takes time, so master the fundamentals, and add to your arsenal gradually.

A HEAVY BAG "DRILL"

Thus far, I've discussed the importance of the "freestyle" work on the bag and a mastery of the fundamentals. Let's now look how you can incorporate these training elements into a "drill". You can incorporate freestyle work with more structured drill work by divvying up the round into three separate sessions.

A sample heavy bag session is listed next. Each three-minute round is divided into three separate one-minute drills.

ROUND ONE

Minute 1

Lead Hand Work: You will work the jab and left hook (right hook for southpaws). You should include feints, head movement, lateral movement in both directions, and multiple punch combinations with the lead hand. For example, you could throw a jab to the head, left hook to the head, followed by a left hook to the body. Keep your non-working hand up by the face for protection. You will only punch with the lead hand for the entire minute.

Minute 2

1-2 Work: You will work the following combinations for the entire minute:

- 1-2
- 1-1-2
- 1-2-1-2

Focus on snapping the 1-2 with maximum speed. Let the hands flow. Keep the hands up throughout the minute. Mix up the use of each combination. All punches must be thrown with speed and compactness.

Minute 3

Freestyle: Finish the last minute of the round with freestyle boxing on the bag. Throw a variety of combinations, also working on footwork, feints, and head movement. Box the bag as if it were an actual opponent.

ROUND TWO

Minute 1

Power Punching: Throw power combinations for the entire minute. Each punch must be thrown with maximum power. Hit the bag to the body and head.

Minute 2

Movement and Speed: Box the bag from the outside focusing on lateral movement and hand speed. Snap fast punches throughout the round, moving to the left and right.

Minute 3

Freestyle: Finish the last minute of the round with freestyle boxing on the bag. Throw a variety of combinations, also working on footwork, feints, and head movement. Box the bag as if it were an actual opponent.

ROUND THREE

Minute 1

Freestyle: Start the first minute of the round with freestyle boxing on the bag. Throw a variety of combinations, also working on footwork, feints, and head movement. Box the bag as if it were an actual opponent.

Minute 2

Lead Hand Work: You will work the jab and left hook (right hook for southpaws). You should include feints, head movement, lateral movement in both directions, and multiple punch combinations with the lead hand.

Minute 3

10 x 10 System - Perform the 10 x 10 System drill for the last minute of the round. Work through as many 10-punch intervals as possible.

ROUND FOUR

Minute 1

Freestyle: Start the first minute of the round with freestyle boxing on the bag. Throw a variety of combinations, also working on footwork, feints, and head movement. Box the bag as if it were an actual opponent.

Minute 2

Power Punching: Throw power combinations for the entire minute. Each punch must be thrown with maximum power. Hit the bag to the body and head.

Minute 3

1-2 Work: You will work the following combinations for the entire minute:

- 1-2

- 1-1-2
- 1-2-1-2

Focus on snapping the 1-2 with maximum speed. Let the hands flow. Keep the hands up throughout the minute. Mix up the use of each combination. All punches must be thrown with speed and compactness.

CONDITIONING CIRCUIT

After completing four rounds on the heavy bag, finish with three all-out punch intervals, each lasting 60 seconds. You will throw non-stop 1-2-1-2-1-2 for the duration of the one-minute interval. Rest one-minute between each punch interval. Repeat this sequence three times.

SUMMARY

This workout consists of the following:

- 4 x 3-minute rounds heavy bag work (12 minutes of work)
- 3 x 1-minute rounds of punch intervals (3 minutes of work)

I encourage you to create your own heavy bag workouts. This four round workout is just one of many options. Focus on different aspects of your game during each minute of each round. Many fighters become “bored” when performing the same drill for three minutes. A fighter will often start the round with the intention of working the jab for the entire round. After one-minute, the fighter becomes bored and loses focus. The remainder of the round suffers.

Do not “coast” through your heavy bag workouts. You need to make the most of each minute. If you plan your workouts ahead of time, you are able to target multiple objectives.

You can use a digital timer that displays seconds to keep track of time. I recently bought a \$20 digital wall clock that has large numbers and seconds displayed. It is easy to keep track of time. A quick glance to the clock will tell you it is time to proceed to the next drill.

You can then finish with punch-out intervals on the bag. You will have already achieved your skill training objectives. You will finish with a brief anaerobic conditioning circuit. This workout will not take long, but you can be sure that it will be effective.

Lastly, you will notice that Rounds 1 and 2 concluded with freestyle boxing. Rounds 3 and 4 began with freestyle boxing. I designed the workout like this for specific reason. Fatigue will begin to set in after Rounds 1 and 2. It is best to start the subsequent rounds with the freestyle portion. If you finished Rounds 3 and 4 with freestyle, you are more likely to “coast” through the round without adequate intensity. You are better off “boxing” the bag when you are fresh. You can then finish the rounds with more structured drills to ensure adequate work is completed.

To conclude, let’s quickly review the words of E.B. White...

“Make the work interesting, and the discipline will take care of itself.”

Keep your bag work interesting (and fun) and you’ll get a lot more out of it.

BOXING SMART

On December 13th, 2003, Cory Spinks defeated Ricardo Mayorga to become the undisputed Welterweight champion. Many boxing analysts viewed Cory's success as a huge upset. Mayorga entered the bout fresh off two consecutive victories over Vernon Forrest (one by way of knockout).

We all knew that Ricardo Mayorga was the stronger fighter. He entered the ring against Vernon Forest at 160 pounds (after weighing in at 146 the night before). Mayorga is big and powerful.

The average boxing fan thought Spinks had NO chance against the power-punching Mayorga.

Guess what...

The average fan does not understand or appreciate the complexity of this sport. Cory Spinks is a perfect example that boxing is a skill sport. Without skill, power is useless. Cory Spinks boxed from **angles**. He made Mayorga miss with wild punches, and responded with effective **counter punches**.

After the fight, there were critics who felt Cory had not "hurt" Mayorga, hence did not deserve the title. Boxing is a sport scored with points. There is no question that Cory Spinks boxed circles around Ricardo Mayorga.

As a fighter, you can (and should) learn from this fight. You do not need to win every bout by knockout. In amateur boxing, knockouts are rare, particularly at the **elite** level. If you go to any national tournament, you can be sure that less than 10% of bouts are ended by knockout.

Power punching is important, but it is useless if you can only punch air. Ricardo Mayorga made many mistakes. One of the obvious mistakes was his inability to cut off the ring. Rather than cutting the ring down, Mayorga chased Spinks. Mayorga made it easy for Cory Spinks to circle the ring to avoid punishment.

CUTTING OFF THE RING

You should never "chase" down your opponent. You need to cut the ring off, and control the movement that takes place in the ring (ring generalship). You should never follow your opponent. Rather, you must become his mirror, controlling which way he moves. You can control his movement by stepping

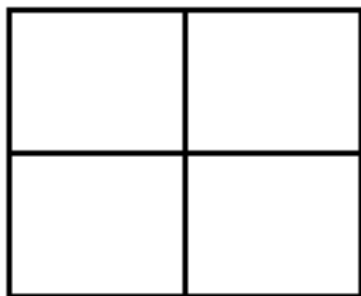
and punching. For example, suppose your opponent attempts to circle the ring to **your** left. You can bring him back to the right by throwing a left hook.

A common scenario occurs when your opponent attempts to box and counter punch off **your** attack. For example, as you throw a left hook, your opponent will attempt to move to his left (your right). He will attempt to circle around you, using the entire ring. You must prevent this by immediately throwing a right hand to bring him back to his right (your left). Ultimately, you begin to control where your opponent moves. You keep him directly in front of you, unable to circle the ring and establish angles.

You should always be moving forward or side-to-side to counter his movements. Do not trail backwards, or you will be unable to cut down the ring.

A COMMON DRILL

Let's look at a common drill that is used to practice cutting off the ring... You will get in the center of the ring, while a partner attempts to circle the ring (as the boxer). You should imagine that the ring is divided into 4 squares.



You will assume the center position. Your goal is to keep your opponent confined to one of the mini-squares. He should not be allowed to circle his way to a new square. You will become his mirror, reacting to his attempts to circle the ring with countering footwork and punches. Eventually, you should attempt to corner him against the ropes. Do not allow him to circle out of the corner. If he evades your attack, you should immediately restart the drill, once again cutting his movement down to one mini-square.

With consistent practice, you will automatically cut the ring off against a fleet footed boxer. You will then take control of the bout, as **YOU** dictate the rules of engagement. Cutting the ring off is a critical skill. It will allow you to take the ring away from a boxer such as Cory Spinks.

As you begin to cut off the ring, the boxer will expend great amounts of energy attempting to "get away". He will use far more energy trying to evade a fighter who cuts off the ring, as opposed to the fighter who simply follows him around the ring (a la Ricardo Mayorga).

Make no mistake about it... It is tiring to continuously circle the ring. It is even more tiring when you pressure the boxer and force him to evade your well-planned attack. It will not take long for his legs to tire. As fatigue sets in, he becomes more likely to fight YOUR fight.

A former trainer of mine described a fighter who cuts the ring off as a "landlord". You need to be the landlord of the ring. You own the land, so you control where your opponent will move. It is easy for a boxer to "box" when you LET him box. It is a new ballgame when you begin to dictate the action, and control the "real estate".

TWO GREAT EXAMPLES

Ok, we know that Ricardo Mayorga did NOT cut off the ring, which ultimately cost him a world title. Let's shift our attention to two fighters who were masters at cutting off the ring.

Roberto Duran is one of the best lightweights in the history of boxing. He had tremendous foot speed. He was a master at cutting off the ring. He forced slick boxers to fight with him, rather than using the entire ring to box.

Another great example is Julio Cesar Chavez. Chavez was perhaps the best fighter EVER at cutting off the ring. He was known to cut the ring off and deliver brutal body shots.

I highly recommend reviewing tapes from Chavez and Duran. There is no better way to learn than by watching the all-time greats in action.

KEEPING YOUR COMPOSURE

Let's continue the discussion about Cory Spinks and Ricardo Mayorga. It is obvious that Mayorga failed to cut off the ring. He became aggravated as the bout progressed. It is frustrating to continually chase your opponent, as you swing and hit nothing but air.

As the bout progressed, Mayorga's frustration amplified. He was penalized for hitting after the bell and hitting behind the head. The point deductions ultimately cost him the bout.

Compare Ricardo Mayorga's performance to that of Micky Ward during his first bout against Arturo Gatti. Ward was outboxed throughout the first half of the bout. Gatti circled the ring and landed at will. Did Micky Ward lose his

composure and begin fighting dirty? Did Micky Ward get desperate and begin flailing with wild punches?

NO!

Micky Ward kept his composure. He continued to apply pressure, confident that he could catch up to Gatti in the later rounds.

We all know what happened in the bout. Micky Ward took control, eventually dropping Gatti with a body shot in round nine. Ward went on to win a 10-round decision

As a fighter, you must realize that there will be difficult times inside the ring. The time will come when you are matched with a fighter who possesses superior boxing skills. During these times, you cannot succumb to frustration. Rather, you must keep your composure. Keep your poker face on. Continue to apply the pressure, adjusting your game plan when necessary.

Below is a quote from James Roll in an article entitled **“Why I Love Boxing”**...

*“As important as skills and understanding of the profession are to a fighter, you can never underestimate heart and desire. Boxing is about giving everything you have despite the consequences. It's about determination, durability and power. It's about reaching deep inside yourself and finding out what type of person you really are. A person can never really know what type of person they are until they have been tested and boxing provides that test. **In the ring, when things are going badly, is when you really discover who you are and what you are about...**”*

You can read the entire article at:

<http://www.eastsideboxing.com/rall2808.html>

Reread the following line... *“In the ring, when things are going badly, is when you really discover who you are and what you are about...”*

All fighters are put to the “test” at some point in their career. There will be a time when you are challenged. It is during such times that you really find out what you are made of and what you are really about.

You cannot let a bad round get to you. There will be fighters that have difficult styles. They may frustrate you with the jab. This is no reason to call it quits. You must maintain your composure. This may sound like obvious advice, but it is NOT obvious when you are inside the ring.

Fighters lose their composure all the time. It can happen to the best. Don't believe me? Let's go back in time...

On November 25, 1980, Sugar Ray Leonard frustrated Roberto Duran for seven rounds, taunting him from the outside. Finally, with 16 seconds left in the eighth round, Duran had enough as he told the referee, "No mas, no mas (no more)." After the fight, Leonard was quoted as saying, "To make a man quit, to make a Roberto Duran quit, was better than knocking him out."

When you find yourself frustrated inside the ring, you must dig down dip within and remind yourself how bad you want it. Talk to yourself. You must keep your composure until the final bell rings. You could be losing a bout for every minute of every round, and suddenly turn things around with one punch.

On November 5th, 1994, George Foreman demonstrated the importance of maintaining composure. At age 45, Foreman had been completely outboxed for nine rounds by the power punching Heavyweight champion Michael Moorer. Foreman kept his composure throughout the one-sided action, as Moorer hit him at will. In the tenth round, Foreman landed one right hand that sent Moorer crashing to the canvas. The bout was over. George Foreman had become the oldest man to ever win a Heavyweight championship. One punch erased the nine round deficit that Foreman faced going into the 10th.

Keep your composure inside the ring. Always prepare yourself physically and mentally. Boxing is not just about being strong, or being fast. Boxing is a complicated sport.

Prepare yourself for the physical and mental struggle that you will face inside the ring. You may not face the true challenge for several years, but if you continue to compete, the time will come...

A COMMON MISTAKE

As you know, I often preach the importance of sparring. There is no way to learn this sport without stepping inside the ring to spar. The bags don't hit back, so you must practice your skills against a live body.

Rather than harping on the importance of sparring, let's turn our attention to what you do AFTER a sparring session. Take a moment and answer the following question...

What do you do in the gym after a sparring session?

One of the most common mistakes takes place after sparring. I see this happen all the time...

You work through a hard sparring session. Both fighters are exhausted after the final round. You exit the ring, remove the gloves and headgear and head for the water fountain. After a cold drink, many fighters sit down and rest for a moment. After resting a few minutes, your body cools off and you no longer want to train. You are happy with the sparring session, so call it a day...

Fatigue has a funny way of influencing our decision making process.

Don't make this mistake. When preparing to fight, you should not call it quits after sparring. Do not sit down. Get a drink and walk around for a few minutes. Don't take off the hand wraps. Once you are tired, you can really start training. Jump onto the heavy bag and work through 3 or 4 hard rounds. If your coach is available, work the focus mitts with him.

No matter how hard you spar, it does not compare to an actual bout. You do not have to deal with the crowd and the pre-fight nerves. When training to fight, you must get tired at the gym! Yes, that is right, get TIRED! Do not wait for fight night to experience the joy of complete fatigue. You must fight through the exhaustion in the gym. Otherwise, you will not be prepared to fight through the fatigue experienced during an actual bout.

You never know what to expect inside the ring. As an amateur, there is a good chance you will not know who you are fighting. You do not know if you are fighting a boxer, a slugger, or a puncher. You must be prepared to battle for each minute of each round.

Sparring is just one aspect of fight preparation. When you become exhausted from sparring, you must take it one step further. Hit the heavy bag HARD! Push yourself until you are exhausted. Remember, you are not training to look nice on the beach. You are training to fight. You are preparing to face another boxer who is planning to knock you unconscious in front of your family and friends.

Are you going to let him outwork you in the gym? What are you going to do when you are completely exhausted in the final round? Have you ever been there before? Have you ever pushed through the fatigue?

Answer these questions at the gym.

TRAINING TO RECOVER

Boxing is highly anaerobic. There are bursts of all-out intensity, often followed by less intense moments (movement, feinting, parrying, etc.). As a fighter, you must train to recover between the all-out bursts of action. For example, you may find yourself pinned in the corner. You will unleash 10 consecutive punches on the inside. You must then regroup, and be prepared to punch again. You cannot run out of gas, and hope your opponent gives you time to recover.

In the gym, you must train to recover. Below, I have provided a drill that will teach you to recover throughout each round. This workout should be performed for 4 rounds. You will rotate between all-out intervals, followed by movement around the bag where you work the jab, head movement, feints, and footwork. There are three phases to the drill, 10 seconds, 20 seconds, and 30 seconds. Start with 10-second intervals. This drill should be performed with a partner who can monitor time with a sports watch or timer.

RECOVERY TRAINING INTERVAL – 10 SECONDS

- 10-second interval on the bag (all-out intensity)
- 10-second recovery interval
- Continue this pattern for a complete 2 or 3 minute round

Start with 2-minute rounds, and eventually work up to 3-minute rounds. Throw non-stop punches during the all-out intensity interval. As soon as the 10-second burst is complete, begin to circle the bag. Pretend you are Muhammad Ali. Work on footwork. Feint as if you were trying to freeze your opponent. Your partner will monitor time for each 10-second interval. You will continue this drill for an entire round. It may sound easy on paper, but after a few rounds, you will have a change of heart. The key to this drill is to work HARD during each all-out interval.

Eventually, you can work up to 20 or 30 second intervals.

RECOVERY TRAINING INTERVAL – 30 SECONDS

- 30-second interval on the bag (all-out intensity)
- 30-second recovery interval
- Continue this pattern for a complete 2 or 3 minute round

As you begin to work with longer intervals (20 or 30 seconds), you will have a longer period of active rest. Continue to circle the bag and work the jab. You can also throw 2 or 3 punch combinations, focusing only on speed, NOT power. Use this time to recover. After 30 seconds of all-out punching, you will need the time to recover.

30 SECOND REST PERIODS

The following recommendation is NOT related to the **Recovery Training** drills. You should allow 1-minute of rest between rounds during **Recovery Training Intervals**. The 30-second rest period recommendation pertains to traditional training exercises (ex. heavy bag, double end bag, speed bag, mitt work, jump rope, and sparring).

To the coaches in the crowd, drop the rest period to 30 seconds between rounds. Most timers have this option. Ringside and Title Boxing both make timers with the 30-second rest option. Whether your fighters train with 2 or 3 minute rounds, leave the rest period at 30-seconds.

Let your fighters spar with only 30 seconds of rest between rounds. You may get some complaints at first, but after a few weeks, your fighters will adjust to the reduced rest periods. When fight night rolls around, the 1-minute between rounds will feel like an eternity.

I highly recommend reducing the rest period to 30-seconds.

HAND-EYE COORDINATION

Boxing requires lightning quick reflexes. Hand-eye coordination is one of the most important aspects of this sport. You must see punches coming and react accordingly. You must spot openings and attack. The best way to develop the coordination necessary for these situations is by practicing inside the ring.

I have received several questions from boxers who are looking to improve their hand-eye coordination with additional drills and exercises. We all understand the importance of sparring and mitt work. The double end bag is also excellent to develop head movement and reaction ability.

How else can we improve our hand-eye coordination?

The answer may seem childish but I promise that the results are far from juvenile. One of the best ways to improve hand-eye coordination is by juggling. Juggling will coordinate your hands with your eyes without stressing the muscles.

You can juggle in the morning, during the day, at night, etc... You can do it at any time without fear of over training. Juggling is not tiring, but very useful. I have read about several professional athletes who have included juggling into their weekly routine as a way to relax and improve coordination.

Juggling is very challenging. It requires a consistent effort to improve and become proficient. I recommend several frequent, but short practice sessions to achieve positive results.

Below is one link which is useful for starters. The link illustrates the steps necessary to learn 3-ball juggling and one style of 4-ball juggling. You may pick up 3-ball juggling quickly. Four-ball juggling is much more difficult. It will take you some time to develop the necessary coordination. I would definitely give juggling a try. All you need is a few tennis balls to improve coordination.

Check out this juggling link:

http://www.frontiernet.net/~steve_glimpse/juggle.html

MORE HOMEMADE DRILLS

Are you looking for new ways to add variety to your home training routine? Try these two inexpensive drills. They are fun and effective.

Hanging Paper Drill – Hang a piece of paper at eye level. You can hang the paper from the ceiling or between a doorway. All you need is a string or shoelace and a regular piece of paper. Punch the paper as if it were a bag. Work on SPEED when you are hitting the paper. Hit the paper with speed to generate a nice “pop” upon impact. Focus on throwing FAST punches. Mix in jabs and straight right hands. Move the head after snapping quick punches. Do not let the paper sway and hit you.

Bruce Lee was said to train with a similar drill. I would definitely try this drill. It is fun and effective. After your roadwork in the morning, work four rounds on the paper. It is a great way to improve speed without injuring the hands. Use bare hands for the drill.

Hanging Tennis Ball – You can perform a similar drill by hanging a tennis ball from the ceiling (or between a doorway). Punch a hole in a tennis ball and attach a string or shoelace. Hit the ball as if it were a double end bag. Try to work on combinations. The ball will swing back and forth, forcing you to move your head. This drill is very effective at improving accuracy and hand-eye coordination. World champion Kostya Tszyu has been known to train with a similar drill. You can work three rounds on the hanging paper drill and then three rounds on the hanging tennis ball drill. You will get six great rounds of work without stressing the muscles. You can perform these drills in the morning without fatiguing the body for your evening workout.

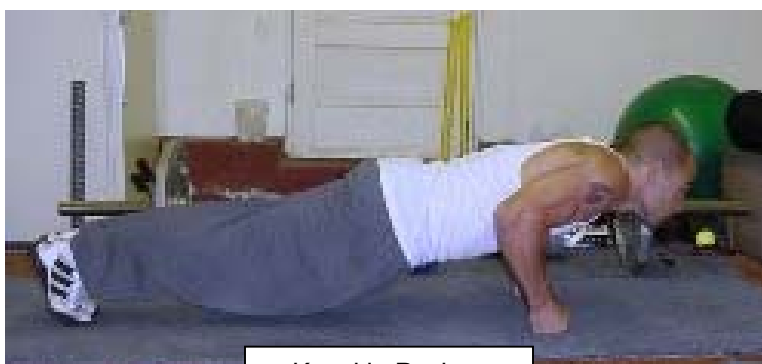
I highly recommend these simple, yet effective drills. Between juggling, the hanging paper drill, and the hanging tennis ball drill, you have three great ways to train at home without the need for any fancy equipment.

THE HANDS

Let's look at two exercises that all boxers should perform to help prevent hand injuries...

I recommend these exercises at least 3 days per week.

Knuckle Pushups - Perform a traditional pushup but instead of starting from your hands, you will form a fist and perform the pushup from your fist (knuckle). This puts your bodyweight on the fists, thus strengthening all the supporting joints and muscles involved in the delivery of a punch.



Knuckle Pushup

Fingertip Pushups - Perform a traditional pushup but instead of starting from your hands, you will start from your fingertips. This puts your bodyweight on the fingertips, which will greatly strengthen the fingers and hand. This exercise will be very difficult if it is new to you. You should eventually work your way up to 50 Finger Pushups.



Fingertip Pushup

WHY RUNNING MAKES SENSE

I recently received an email from one reader of the RossBoxing site who was unhappy with my article about the importance of roadwork. The reader argued that boxers are trained to fight, not run. He argued that running is not a sport-specific method of training. He preferred to spar and hit the bag.

I also prefer to spar and hit the bag, but that does not give me a free pass to exclude roadwork from my training schedule. Running is one of the best ways to improve anaerobic endurance. You can run hard in the morning and then train at the boxing gym in the evening. I love to spar, but there are not many gyms open at five o'clock in the morning. You should not spar twice in one day, so running allows you to train anaerobically without fatiguing the upper body.

I guarantee that the man who argued about the importance of roadwork could NOT complete an entire interval workout. Interval running on the track is very difficult. Most fighters do not run intervals.

Why not?

The answer is simple. Intervals are painful! There is nothing fun about running intervals first thing in the morning. If you are willing to suck it up, your body will thank you after the fight. Intervals are perhaps the best method of anaerobic conditioning.

You can fatigue the body without stressing your valuable punching muscles. If you run early in the morning, you will have all day to rest before training in the gym at night. Roadwork has been included in a boxer's regimen since the sport was created. All fighters include a regular roadwork session.

To summarize, do not neglect the importance of roadwork. If you are preparing to fight competitively, be sure to include interval-running in your weekly training regimen. Be creative with your routine. Variety is important.

ANOTHER ROADWORK ROUTINE

As you know, I advocate the use of interval training to improve anaerobic condition. With this said, we all have mornings when we dread the thought of interval training. One of the best ways to stay motivated is by continuing to incorporate variety into your running program.

Here is an intense roadwork session that you can use to push your anaerobic system to the max!

- Warm up by jogging 1 mile
- 300 meter interval at close to all-out intensity
- 100 meter jog
- 300 meter interval at close to all-out intensity
- 100 meter jog
- 300 meter interval at close to all-out intensity
- 100 meter jog
- 400 meter interval
- Rest by walking 400 meters
- Repeat a second set of this routine if you really want to crank up the intensity

This program is very intense and does not take long to complete. Each 300-meter interval should be run at a fast pace. You will follow each 300-meter interval with 100 meters of active rest via a slow jog. You will continue this for three intervals. Your final interval will consist of an all-out 400 meter run.

As your condition improves, you can work through this routine two times.

SPRINTS & INTERVALS WITHOUT REST

In my book, [The Underground Guide To Warrior Fitness](#), I provide several conditioning drills that add to the intensity of our traditional sprint and interval workouts. One of the best ways to increase the intensity is by incorporating exercise into the rest period of the interval or sprint session.

Let's look at a sample sprint workout that incorporates pushups and V-ups into the rest period...

SPRINT TRAINING WITHOUT REST - SAMPLE

- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 pushups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 V-Ups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 pushups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 V-Ups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 pushups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 V-Ups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 pushups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 V-Ups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 pushups
- Sprint 100 meters
- 20 V-Ups

This routine will not take long to complete. It requires 1000 meters of sprint work, coupled with 100 pushups and V-ups.

HIGH INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING

I have received several inquiries from fellow boxers about a fitness trend known as HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training). The primary question has been what is HIIT and can it be useful for boxers.

HIIT involves short bursts of all-out effort, followed by short periods of active rest such as walking, jogging, biking, or swimming. You will choose an activity for your HIIT workout such as running or biking. After a 5-10 minute warm-up, you will proceed with 20-30 second bursts of near maximal effort. You will push yourself as hard as possible. Following the 20-30 second burst of intensity, you will then follow up with a 30 second period of slow paced work. After 30 seconds of light activity, you will proceed with another all-out effort and continue.

Most HIIT programs start with 5 or 6 intervals, and gradually build up towards 12 or 15 intervals. Let's look at a sample 6-week program. For this program, I have selected running as the interval exercise. You can substitute running with other activities such as the stationary bike or jump rope. I personally believe that running is most effective, but as long as you push yourself, you will achieve similar results.

For this program, one interval equates to 30 seconds of all-out running followed by 30 seconds of light jogging. If this pattern is too difficult, I recommend that you start with 20 seconds of all-out running, followed by 40 seconds of light jogging. Continue this pattern without rest until all intervals are complete.

SAMPLE PROGRAM

Week 1:

Monday	5 intervals
Wednesday	6 intervals
Friday	7 intervals

Week 2:

Monday	6 intervals
Wednesday	7 intervals
Friday	8 intervals

Week 3:

Monday	7 intervals
Wednesday	8 intervals
Friday	9 intervals

Week 4:

Monday	8 intervals
Wednesday	9 intervals
Friday	10 intervals

Week 5:

Monday	9 intervals
Wednesday	10 intervals
Friday	11 intervals

Week 6:

Monday	10 intervals
Wednesday	11 intervals
Friday	12 intervals

You will only receive the true benefits of this program if you CRANK UP THE INTENSITY during the sprint portions of the workout.

Ok, now that you have a sample workout, let's answer the real question. Does this system work and is it worthwhile for a boxer?

First, let's answer the question about whether or not this form of training makes sense. The answer is a resounding YES. Interval training will dramatically improve anaerobic endurance.

What about fat loss?

More and more studies indicate that high intensity interval training actually burns more calories than traditional long distance running. This may come as a surprise at first glance. For years, we have read that 20-40 minutes of moderate aerobic work was best for fat loss.

Science is now telling us something different. Interval training will raise your body's metabolism throughout the day. Aerobic running will only burn calories during the workout. Intense interval work has a lasting impact throughout the day. If you are looking to lose weight, high intensity interval training is the perfect program for you.

Does HIIT make sense for boxers?

I tried HIIT for 4 weeks. I ran 30 second sprints followed by 30 seconds of jogging on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I started with 12 intervals the first week and ran 15 intervals per workout for weeks 2, 3, and 4. I personally prefer more variety (ex. 200 or 400 meter intervals), but the workouts were effective.

This form of training is effective if you do not have access to a track. You can perform HIIT style running with nothing more than a stopwatch. You can sprint 30 seconds down the road and then jog 30 seconds. There is no need for measured distances. You simply run all out for a designated time period.

For more information about HIIT, check out these two links:

HIIT and Run - By Shawn Phillips

<http://www.musclemedia.com/training/hiit.asp>

High Intensity Interval Training - By Justin Palermo

<http://www.teenbodybuilding.com/justin6.htm>

BURPEE INTERVALS

I have received several questions from customers who wish to perform intervals, but have nowhere to run. These individuals live in congested cities without access to any fields or open sidewalks for running. If you find yourself in this situation, you can get a great interval workout inside your home. Burpees are here to save the day...



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4

Burpees - Begin in a squat position with hands on the floor in front of you (1). Kick your feet back to a pushup position (2). Immediately return your feet to the squat position (3). Leap up as high as possible from the squat position (4). Repeat, moving as fast as possible.

This bodyweight exercise provides tremendous conditioning benefits. If I had to choose one exercise to include in my routine, burpees would be at the top of the list. This exercise will strengthen the upper and lower body while developing a whole new sense of anaerobic endurance and explosiveness.

BURPEE INTERVALS

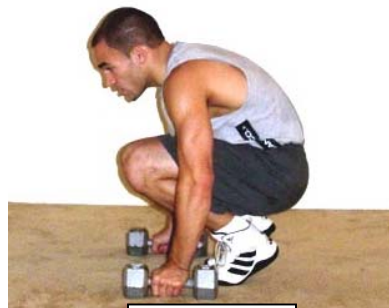
- 30 seconds of burpees
- 30 seconds of rest
- 30 seconds of burpees
- 30 seconds of rest
- Continue

Each interval will consist of 30 seconds of burpees, followed by 30 seconds of rest. When this becomes easy, replace the rest period with shadow boxing.

- 30 seconds of burpees
- 30 seconds shadow boxing
- 30 seconds of burpees
- 30 seconds of shadow boxing
- Continue

You can work up to 12 intervals in one session. This workout will only last 12 minutes, but I promise you that it will feel like a lifetime. Focus on exploding off the ground with each repetition. This exercise must be performed at a brisk pace. You should average approximately 10-12 burpees per 30 seconds. This estimate assumes that you explode upward, off the ground. If 12 intervals are too difficult, you can follow the 6-week program illustrated earlier for HIIT training. Start with five burpee intervals and gradually work yourself up to twelve. Add shadow boxing to the active rest period to crank up the intensity.

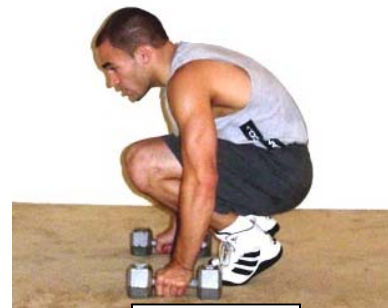
Next, I have illustrated a variation to the traditional burpee. These illustrations were taken from my book [Medicine Ball Training and Then Some...](#)



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4

Dumbbell Burpee – Perform a traditional burpee with dumbbells in hand. After returning to the crouch position in Step 3, you will jump upwards with the dumbbells by your sides. The dumbbells will really add to the intensity of this exercise. I recommend starting with a light pair of dumbbells such as 10 – 15 lbs. You may wish to place a pillow on the floor below the dumbbells to avoid scraping the surface (if you have hardwood floors).

For more information on burpees (including a video demo), check out my article: [Burpee Conditioning](#)

INJURY PREVENTION

As boxers, we recognize the importance of roadwork. We must incorporate sprints, interval work, and distance runs into our training regimen. **The Boxer's Guide To Performance Enhancement** includes several running drills. Unfortunately, all of this running can lead to pain and injury in the feet and legs. One of the most common injuries among runners and boxers are shin splints. Shin splints are a common term used for a number of lower leg injuries including nerve irritations, tendonitis, and stress fractures.

The most common form of shin splints involves the tearing away of muscle tissue that attaches to the front of the lower leg. The result is a pain in the lower leg that can be felt between the knee and ankle. The pain often fades during warm-up but returns after the completion of your workout.

Common causes of shin splints include the following:

- Tight Achilles and calf muscles
- Excessive jump rope on hard surfaces
- Sprint and interval work
- Running in old shoes that lack proper cushioning
- Excessive uphill running

The best treatment for shin splints includes rest, ice, stretching, and anti-inflammatory medications that include Ibuprofen.

So does this mean that we should not conduct sprints, intervals, or hill running?

Of course not... Rather, we must take preventive action to avoid these injuries. Once again, it is not enough to train hard, we must train **SMART**.

PREVENTION

1. First, you should conduct a proper warm-up followed by a stretching routine. There is no substitute for warm-up and stretching, particularly on sprint or interval days. You should follow the stretching and warm-up routine included in the book.
2. Always wear proper running shoes. Many old timers had their fighters run in work boots, as they believed the added weight would aid in their

conditioning. Unfortunately, these trainers did not factor in the abuse that boots deliver to the feet and legs. Proper running shoes provide the much-needed cushion to your feet to prevent injury. Most “runners” suggest purchasing new running shoes every six months.

Below are some strengthening exercises that will help you overcome the pain of shin splints...

1. Stand with both feet flat on the floor, lift your toes off the ground while your heel remains planted on the floor. This simple movement will strengthen the muscles around your shins
2. While sitting, lower and raise your toes with the heels on the ground as high and quickly as possible for 60 seconds. (You can do this at work or school)
3. Calf raises
4. Walk on your toes
5. Walk on your heels

These simple exercises will help you overcome and prevent shin splints. As boxers, we have no time for injury. We cannot miss valuable running sessions so perform these simple exercises and say good-bye to shin splints.

CORE STRENGTHENING EXERCISE

CORE EXERCISE - THE PLANK

One challenging exercise from [The Underground Guide To Warrior Fitness](#) is the Plank. The Plank is a tremendous exercise to develop the abdominal wall.



Plank – Start in a pushup position, and then drop your elbows to the ground. Only your forearms and toes should touch the ground. Keep the back straight and hold the position for time. A five minute plank is very challenging.

MORE CONDITIONING

The Boxer's Guide To Performance Enhancement includes several conditioning drills.

Below, I have listed a useful home-based conditioning drill. If you miss one day at the gym, you can achieve a tremendous workout with little or no equipment.

HOME BASED WORKOUT

- 6 rounds of shadow boxing (3-minute rounds) with 30 seconds of rest between rounds
- 2-minute conditioning drill (see below). Repeat 6 times with 30 second rest intervals
- 6 rounds of shadow boxing (3-minute rounds) with 30 seconds of rest between rounds

Conditioning Drill - Alternate high-knee running in place with all-out shadow boxing. Perform each exercise for a count of 10 before switching. The shadow boxing portion of the drill will consist of all-out punching with the basic combination 1-2-1-2-1-2 etc... (1 = left jab, 2 = straight right hand). You can add 2 or 3 pound hand weights to increase the intensity.

High-knee running in place will be conducted at maximum intensity. Bring the knees to waist height throughout the drill. You will alternate between these two exercises, non-stop, for the entire drill.

Try this conditioning drill and you will quickly realize its intensity. I finish these drills with six rounds of shadow boxing to shift my focus back towards technique.

Shadow boxing is an excellent training exercise when used correctly. Do not "go through the motions" when shadow boxing. Throw ALL of your combinations while moving in ALL directions.

Following this home workout, you can finish with an abdominal circuit.

THE 10-MINUTE CHALLENGE

If you have trouble finding time for a conditioning workout, try this 10-minute routine. This workout is time efficient and effective.

The purpose of this routine is to score as many “points” as possible. This routine consists of the following three exercises:

Bodyweight Squats (1 point):

- Assume a stance with your feet shoulder-width apart (or slightly wider) and toes pointing forward.
- Lower your butt down (flat footed) as you maintain an upright posture.
- Simultaneously lift your heels from the ground as your butt becomes parallel with the floor.
- Drive off your toes to rise back to an upright position. Continue at a brisk pace.

Pushups (2 points):

- Begin with a traditional pushup. As your strength improves, you can add more difficult variations such as the Diamond Pushup.

Burpees (3 points):

- Begin in a squat position with hands on the floor in front of you.
- Kick your feet back to a pushup position.
- Immediately return your feet to the squat position
- Leap up as high as possible from the squat position
- Repeat, moving as fast as possible.

Each Bodyweight Squat that you perform counts for 1 point. Each pushup counts for 2 points. Each Burpee counts for 3 points.

HOW TO PLAY

This routine requires 10 consecutive minutes of exercise. You can perform the exercises in any order that you choose. Burpees provide the most points, but are also the most strenuous. You will need to balance exercise selection to allow for maximum points, without burning out too quickly. There are no rest periods

allowed during the 10 minutes. You must continue with one of the exercises or your score is reset to zero.

Try this routine. You will never perform it the same way twice. This routine is challenging and fun. Challenge yourself to improve upon your score. When 10 minutes becomes too easy, increase the time by increments of 2 minutes.

As you become fatigued, it will become difficult to keep track of repetitions. I recommend that you count repetitions for each exercise separately and perform the math when you are finished. Keep a running total of repetitions for each exercise. This will force you to use your MIND despite the physical fatigue.

Another (easier) alternative is to jot down your repetitions on a piece of paper after each exercise. This is the easy way out. You will have more time to rest and your overall score will suffer.

10 MORE MINUTES OF PAIN

BURPEE + PULL-UP CHALLENGE

This challenge consists of two exercises:

1. Burpees (1 point)
2. Pull-ups (2 points)

You will perform 10 consecutive minutes of exercise. Alternate between burpees and pull-ups. Only rest when it is absolutely necessary. Your goal is to score as many points as possible. Do not attempt this workout more than 2 days per week. Each week you should strive to increase point totals. You can log your scores on the [RossBoxing message board](#). There is a separate category for Warrior Challenges.

If you do not have access to a pull-up bar, substitute pull-ups with dumbbell snatches.

These challenges are a great way to induce motivation. Challenge YOURSELF to improve.

THE 10 x 10 SYSTEM

The following drill will crank up the intensity of your heavy bag workout...

I have dubbed this drill the **10 x 10 System**. It is one of the best conditioning drills that you can use on the bag. You will throw straight punches for the drill. From your boxing stance, you will throw a rapid-fire 10-punch combination. You will throw a non-stop 1-2-1-2-1-2-1-2-1-2 (1=jab, 2=cross).

You must throw fast, powerful punches. It is important to fully extend and snap your punches. These punches must be thrown HARD to benefit from this drill. Pivot on the balls of your feet and rotate the hips. It is important to maintain proper form.

After the 10-punch combination, you will reset the feet and repeat the drill. It should only take 1-2 seconds to regroup. Do not exceed 2 seconds before throwing your second 10-punch combination, once again focusing on speed and power.

Continue this sequence ten times before resting. Each cycle of the **10 x 10 System** will require 100 punches. You should repeat this drill for 4 to 10 cycles. If you can work yourself to 10 cycles, you will have thrown 1000 punches with maximal exertion. Limit rest between cycles to less than 1-minute. As your condition improves, you can cut the rest to 30 seconds.

QUALITY PUNCHES

This drill is useful for many reasons. First, it emphasizes quality punches. You throw 10 hard punches, regroup, and continue with 10 more quality punches. This form of training is unique from the traditional bag drill where you throw non-stop punches for a specific period. Both drills are useful, but for different reasons. When you punch non-stop for a set period (ex. 30 seconds, 1 minute, 2 minutes, etc.), your focus is purely on stamina. The quality of your punches gradually declines. As you approach the end of the interval, your punches become sloppy, with less snap and power.

The **10 x 10 System** is different. This drill emphasizes quality and quantity. The split second that you have to regroup between each 10-punch combination allows you to quickly recover, and return with another quality combination. When you fight, your goal is to throw quality punches throughout the bout. Technique and punch quality cannot deteriorate.

The **10 x 10 System** trains you to throw fast, powerful punches in succession. When you box, you will often throw a powerful combination, then move, and then return with another combination. You will rarely throw non-stop punches for more than a few seconds. Your opponent will either move, counter punch, or hold. The **10 x 10 System** is more sport-specific and realistic.

After a few sessions, you will be able to maintain speed and power throughout the drill. When you can work 10 straight cycles, you will have throw 1000 powerful punches in one training session. You will see noticeable improvements in punch output when sparring.

WHEN TO INCLUDE THIS DRILL

The **10 x 10 System** is very demanding. I recommend 2-3 days per week with this drill. You can work this drill either before or after your normal bag work. You can also use this drill as a substitute for a day's heavy bag workout. For example, you could start with 10 cycles of the **10 x 10 System** before moving on to the double end bag or speed bag.

A sample session could include:

- 4 rounds of shadow boxing
- 10 cycles of the 10 x 10 System
- 6 rounds of double end bag
- 4 rounds of the speed bag
- 4 rounds of jump rope

You could then finish with calisthenics and abdominal work. The **10 x 10 System** is a great way to add variety to your traditional heavy bag workout.

NO HEAVY BAG = NO PROBLEM

If you do not have access to a heavy bag, you can perform this drill with light hand weights. I recommend 1-3 pounds. The focus of this drill is on speed and power. Do not use heavy hand weights that will slow you down. Rather than punching the bag, you will shadow box with the hand weights.

You can also incorporate movement into the drill. You will not be restricted to the space directly next to the heavy bag. You can throw 10 punches, then side step or pivot, throw another 10-punch combination, and continue. Minimize rest between combinations (1 or 2 seconds).

You can also include additional combinations. I always recommend straight punches on the heavy bag during these speed/power drills, since straight punches can be throw in rapid succession without moving the bag. When you incorporate hooks and uppercuts, the bag has a tendency to move to the sides, causing you to slow down, which negates the purpose of the drill.

You will not contend with the bag when shadow boxing. You can incorporate additional combinations into the **10 x 10 System**. Two that I recommend are the listed below...

STRAIGHT RIGHT HAND + LEFT HOOK

- Straight Right Hand + Left Hook + Straight Right Hand + Left Hook...

Continue this combination for 10 consecutive punches (5 right hands, 5 hooks). If you are a southpaw, reverse the combination. You would instead throw a straight left hand + right hook.

RIGHT UPPER CUT + LEFT HOOK

- Right Uppercut + Left Hook + Right Uppercut + Left Hook...

Continue this combination for 10 consecutive punches (5 uppercuts, 5 hooks). If you are a southpaw, reverse the combination. You would instead throw a left uppercut + right hook.

Continue each drill until you have achieved 10 x 10.

I highly recommend the **10 x 10 System**. One of the latest buzzwords in boxing is "power-boxing". Shane Mosley's style has been referred to as "power-boxing". Shane's father and trainer Jack Mosley describes power-boxing as a way of fighting at a rapid pace while trying to land lethal power shots.

The **10 x 10 System** will train you to "power-box", as you throw power punches at a rapid pace.

“WRESTLING” WITH BOXING

I recently received an inquiry regarding preparations for an opponent who brawls and holds on the inside. This style of boxing can become quite fatiguing, as the match shifts between boxing and wrestling for position. If you are not accustomed to fighting at close range, you can expect to run out of gas against such an opponent.

One drill that Pepe Vasquez (former pro boxer and conditioning coach for Marlon Starling when he won the world title in 1989 against Lloyd Honeyghan) has used involves random intervals of mitt work and “wrestling”. I have been fortunate to train with Pepe for many years. He was a pro boxer and All-American wrestler. Pepe brings intensity to a new level.

When holding the punch mitts, he will randomly grab his fighter and attempt to “bully” him around the ring. You (the fighter hitting the mitts) must wrestle with him, while pushing forward with the legs. After approximately 30-45 seconds of all-out wrestling/pushing/clenching, Pepe will step back and call out several high-speed combinations.

The wrestling portion of the drill will fatigue you. Once fatigue sets in, you must immediately return to “boxing” by throwing multiple punch combinations. The focus of this drill is purely strength and conditioning, not skill development. When you punch, you should punch hard! Do not work on feinting or head movement. Work on throwing hard punches (in bunches!).

SAMPLE 3-MINUTE ROUND

- Traditional Mitt Work (combination punching) x 45 seconds
- “Wrestling” Drill x 45 seconds
- Traditional Mitt Work (combination punching) x 30 seconds
- “Wrestling” Drill x 30 seconds
- Punch Out Drill (non-stop punching – 1-2-1-2...) x 30 seconds

***Note** – Always finish with an interval of punching (not wrestling). We are training to fight, not for a spot in an upcoming WWE broadcast.*

Incorporate three rounds of “wrestling mitt-work” if you are preparing to box an inside fighter who does a lot of holding. You will not fatigue from this style of boxing.

A NEW TRAINING SYSTEM

As a trainer and coach, it is my responsibility to research new training systems. There is no perfect training program. We can always learn new ideas and apply new methodologies. You should always approach new training ideas with an open mind. The learning process is lifelong. I continuously research and develop new ideas for training programs and routines.

One of the latest training systems to attract widespread attention is known as Escalated Density Training, commonly referred to as EDT. EDT is a strength-training program that was created by Charles Staley, one of the most sought after strength and conditioning coaches in the business.

The basic overview of the EDT system is as follows... You train two antagonistic muscles for a set period. For example, you will train the biceps and triceps, or the quadriceps and hamstrings. Throughout the routine, you will alternate between the two muscle groups. For example, you will perform one set of bicep curls followed by one set of triceps extensions. You should use a weight that you can complete for ten repetitions. You will perform sets of 3-5 repetitions for each exercise, for the entire period (10-20 minutes).

Your goal is to complete as many repetitions as possible in the given time period. Strive to perform additional repetitions each time you complete the workout. For example, if you finish with 100 bicep curls and 100 triceps extensions, you should strive to perform 105 repetitions the next time you attempt the workout.

This system may sound similar to the **10-Minute Challenge** (discussed previously), where your goal was to score as many points (reps) as possible. I encourage you to read more about the EDT system. This system is gaining widespread recognition and acceptance in the strength-training world.

EDT TRAINING ARTICLES

Liberate Yourself From Class Weight Training - By Charles Staley

<http://www.bodybuilding.com/fun/staley9.htm>

The EDT Arm Specialization Mesocycle - By Charles Staley

<http://www.t-nation.com/readTopic.do?id=459874>

Escalating Density Training, Phase 2 - By Charles Staley

<http://www.t-nation.com/readTopic.do?id=459764>

HOW DOES EDT RELATE TO BOXING?

Great question! EDT training does not relate directly to boxing, but we can borrow some of the principles to achieve an excellent strength and conditioning workout. I encourage you to read the articles listed above to educate yourself on this training system. Do not rule out any new training ideas. Remain open minded to all training methodologies.

OK, enough of my preaching... Let's look at some EDT Training (Ross style).

I have selected two exercises for our EDT training protocol. This routine is a definite ass kicker!

DUMBBELL SWINGS + BURPEES

For this workout, you will set a stopwatch or timer for 10 minutes. During this 10-minute period, your goal is to perform as many repetitions of each exercise as possible. You will rotate between dumbbell swings (for each arm) and burpees.

SAMPLE ROUTINE

- 5 x Dumbbell Swings (right arm)
- 5 x Dumbbell Swings (left arm)
- 5 x Burpees
- Repeat

You will continue this pattern for the entire 10-minute period. Minimize rest between exercises. When selecting a weight for the dumbbell swings, use a dumbbell that you can perform 10 repetitions with for each arm. Do not be concerned about using heavy weights. After 10-minutes of continuous exercise, you will become quite fatigued. Do not choose a weight that is too heavy to complete the workout.

You can conduct this workout 2-3 times per week. You should strive to perform more repetitions each time that you attempt the workout. If 10 minutes becomes too easy, you can either increase the weight, or increase your time interval (ex. 15 or 20 minutes). Do not exceed 20 minutes.

Lastly, in case you are interested, I have NO affiliation with Charles Staley or any of the products he has created. I am simply passing along some information on a training system that appears both legitimate and useful.

A GREAT CONDITIONING DRILL

Are you looking to spice up your roadwork? The following conditioning drill will help you maintain explosive power round after round...

POWER TRAINING

- Perform 12 Burpees
- Immediately sprint 100 meters
- Perform 10 Plyometric Pushups
- Jog back to the starting point and continue
- Repeat 6 times

You will begin with 12 explosive burpees. Focus on exploding off the ground. After completing 12 repetitions, you will proceed with an all-out sprint for 100 meters. Upon completing the sprint, drop down and perform 10 Plyometric Pushups. You can add a clap to these pushups if you wish. After completing 10 pushups, return to your feet and jog back to the starting line. Repeat this cycle 6 times without resting. Your only rest is the jog back to the starting point, after each set of pushups.

This conditioning drill focuses on explosive power and anaerobic endurance. There will be times when you must throw explosive combinations despite fatigue. This drill will help you maintain power throughout a match. You can use this drill as a substitute for interval running.

GENERAL PHYSICAL PREPARATION

General Physical Preparation is one of the hottest topics in the strength and conditioning world. Commonly referred to as GPP, this form of training is designed to improve endurance, work threshold, and recovery abilities. General Physical Preparation is used to increase an athlete's ability to maintain intense workloads.

There are two general categories of GPP. Non-weighted GPP and weighted GPP. Our focus will be on non-weighted GPP. This variation involves an assortment of bodyweight calisthenics performed for a set time period. Common exercises include burpees, jumping jacks, split jumps, high-knee running in place, and pushups.

The Minute Drills that I discussed in **The Boxer's Guide** are perfect examples of GPP. These drills are designed to improve endurance in a sport-specific manner.

If are not performing Minute Drills, you are doing yourself a disservice. Minute Drills will dramatically endurance and recuperative abilities. You should include this form of training at least 2 days per week, and as many as 4-5.

You can stick with the Minute Drills that were outlined in **The Boxer's Guide**, or you can perform one extended drill that consists of 8-10 minutes of non-stop exercise. Make it a habit to perform these drills on a regular basis.

A SAMPLE ROUTINE

Below I have listed six exercises. You will perform each exercise for a designated time. I recommend wearing a wristwatch to keep track of time. I purchased an inexpensive sport watch for less than \$10. It has a stopwatch feature, which provides an easy way to monitor time.

- Burpees
- Jumping Jacks
- Split Jumps
- Pushups
- High-Knee Running in Place
- Shadow boxing (throw nonstop punches as fast as you can)

Option #1

Perform each exercise for 20 seconds. It will take you 2 minutes to complete one pass through each exercise. Perform this cycle twice without rest (total work = 4 minutes). Rest one minute and repeat. Complete 4 cycles, each consisting for 4 minutes (total work = 16 minutes).

Option #2

Perform each exercise for 30 seconds. It will take you 3 minutes to complete one pass through each exercise. Complete 6 cycles with 1 minute of rest between cycles (total work = 18 minutes).

Option #3

Perform each exercise for 30 seconds. Perform this cycle three times without rest (total work = 9 minutes). You will not rest until 9 minutes of exercise is complete.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF FOR ONE MONTH

Perform these drills (Option 1, 2, or 3) on three non-consecutive days each week (ex. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday). Perform these drills along with your boxing training program. Also, perform the Power Training drill referenced earlier 2 days per week. Lastly, perform the **10 x 10 System** training 3 days per week. Try this for one month.

We all have unique training routines and requirements, but try to find time for these three drills. Let's summarize the month long challenge...

1. Power Training drill = 2 days per week
2. GPP training drills = 3 days per week
3. 10 x 10 System = 3 days per week

You can select Option 1, 2, or 3 for the GPP drill. Pick whichever drill you like. You can mix it up by performing Option #1 on Monday, Option #2 on Wednesday, and Option #3 on Friday. Be creative, think outside the box.

If you stick with these three training drills, I guarantee that your conditioning will improve. If you stick with these drills for an entire month, send me an email and let me know how you have progressed.

A few suggestions...

I would recommend performing the Power Training drill in the morning on two days that you do not perform the GPP training. On your GPP days, perform these drills along with your evening workout. If you run in the morning beforehand, be sure to eat rich sources of protein and complex carbohydrates to foster recovery. As for the **10 x 10 System**, just find time for the drill! You can start your routine with this drill, or finish with it. As long as you perform the drill, you will see the benefits.

WEIGHT TRAINING AND BOXING

There have been several debates on the [RossBoxing message board](#) regarding the effectiveness of weight training for boxers. I would like to clarify some important points regarding weight training for boxers.

As we all know, there are many ancient myths regarding weight training and boxing. Many old-school boxing trainers adamantly oppose the use of weights. Let's look at an obvious question that arises from this *old-school mentality*...

Why do so many boxing trainers oppose weight training? There must be a reason...

There is a reason, and it makes sense. Many young boxers focus too much attention to the weight room. These individuals spend more time pumping iron than they do in the ring. Weight training is their primary form of training. This is a **huge mistake**. Strength training is a supplement to a complete training program, but it is not the primary ingredient.

Strength training will not condition a fighter to throw 100-punches per round. It will not develop the sport-specific anaerobic endurance that is necessary to excel inside the ring. When you focus too much energy towards the weight room, you eat away from other (more pertinent) training objectives.

Boxing is (and always will be) a skill sport. Weight training will not assist with skill development. Each month I receive emails from youngsters asking which exercises "will improve their punching power..."

These individuals are searching for a miracle weight training exercise that will develop explosive punching power. Punching power and weight lifting ability are not the same. There have been many devastating punchers who never lifted weights. True punching power requires proper timing, leverage, and distance. You must generate power throughout the hips and trunk while turning the shoulder and snapping the wrist upon impact. The ability to throw a properly timed (and placed) punch is not developed in the weight room.

Without proper skill development, strength training is useless. You must possess the skill necessary to deliver the strength that you develop in the weight room. If you are spending more than 2 days per week lifting, there is a good chance that you are not dedicating enough time towards boxing improvement and conditioning.

Sparring, heavy bag work, hitting the punch mitts, interval running, conditioning drills, and plyometrics are just a few necessary training ingredients. If you are spending 4 or 5 days per week in the weight room, how can you dedicate enough time and energy towards these objectives?

Use weight training as a supplement. If used correctly, weight training offers numerous benefits to an aspiring boxer. When integrated with plyometrics (complex training), it becomes even more effective. These workouts must emphasize quality over quantity. The routines are intense and effective, without eating too much time on the clock.

In **The Boxer's Guide**, I recommend a Wednesday and Saturday lifting schedule. I choose these two days for a reason. Most boxing gyms are open 5 nights per week (Monday through Friday). If I am training you, I do not want to see you in the weight room on three of the five available nights. You should be in the gym working on boxing improvement and conditioning. If you train HARD in the gym on Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday is a perfect day for weight training. It provides a change of pace in the middle of the week. You can still work on less intense skill aspects on Wednesday and Saturday (ex. shadow boxing, speed bag, double-end bag).

If you hit the heavy bag hard on a daily basis, there is a chance you will burn out. Wednesday is a perfect day to mix things up. You can then perform your second strength training session on Saturday, when the boxing gym is most likely closed.

You will achieve two quality strength sessions, without interfering with your boxing training objectives. This is a perfect example of using strength training as a supplement to a complete routine. It never becomes the primary component, as you continue to develop noticeable improvements in overall strength and power.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION

I read numerous training articles each month. I have noticed a growing interest in boxing and the mixed martial arts from many strength and conditioning coaches. Many "strength coaches" have taken notice of the growing market revolving around "combat athletes". There are many new strength and conditioning articles available for aspiring fighters.

Is this a good thing or bad thing?

It depends... It is great that boxing and other combat sports are gaining more attention. Unfortunately, many trainers are providing bogus advice. For example, I have seen certain trainers claim that a weight routine (or device) will generate knockout power.

This is not the case. There are no miracles in power development. It takes time and a consistent effort. These coaches have misled many aspiring fighters. Rather than developing proper technique, fighters are turning to the weight room in search of power.

Why don't these coaches preach the importance of skill development?

Many do not understand the sport of boxing. These individuals come from weight lifting backgrounds without any real-world experience inside the ring. I recently spoke with a strength coach who had been working with a local pro fighter. The coach insisted that the fighter train with weights 4 days per week.

I disagreed with the man, and attempted to explain that this amount of weight training would detract from the fighter's skill training and sparring. The man disagreed, as he was convinced that weight room strength was equivalent to "being in shape to box".

Rather than debate the issue, I had the individual come to the boxing gym to see "how easy" it was to work through a few hard rounds on the heavy bag and punch mitts. The coach started throwing haymakers at the heavy bag and was completely out of gas within one minute. I encouraged him to keep punching...

He didn't finish the first 3-minute round. My point was made.

What is the point to this story?

Do not buy into the nonsense that weight training will develop the sport-specific stamina required for boxing. Many strength and conditioning coaches do not understand the complexity of our sport. They are unable to comprehend the fatigue that one experiences inside the ring. No textbooks do justice to the fatigue experienced inside the ring. Weight training will not develop the anaerobic endurance necessary to throw over 100 punches per round.

To summarize, focus your energy towards boxing skill improvement and conditioning. Use strength training as a valuable supplement, but never lose sight of skill training and conditioning.

UNCONVENTIONAL TRAINING

Variety is the spice of life. It is important to mix things up to keep your muscles guessing. You cannot train the same way every day. If you lack variety in your routine, training can become boring and your results will plateau. You can add variety to your program with a few “unconventional” training exercises.

SLEDGEHAMMER AND AX TRAINING

Swinging a sledgehammer or ax is an awesome way to develop explosive power and muscular endurance. I briefly mentioned these tools in **The Boxer's Guide**.

I recently wrote an article regarding [The Importance of Variety](#). I mentioned that I was training with a sledgehammer two days per week. Since writing the article, I have received several questions about where to purchase a quality sledgehammer.

I recently purchased a brand new 16-pound sledgehammer from Home Depot for \$29.99. The brand name is Ludell (I have no affiliation with the company). The sledgehammer's manufacturer guarantees that the fiberglass handle will not break.

I recommend smashing the sledgehammer against an old tire. You should be able to locate a tire for free at any tire shop. Most tire shops will be eager to give away old tires, rather than paying to dispose them.

When swinging the sledgehammer against the tire, start with 2-minute rounds. Swing the sledgehammer continuously for an entire 2-minute round. Rest 1-minute between rounds, and repeat for 4-6 rounds. When this becomes easy, increase the length of each round to 3-minutes (and/or reduce the rest between rounds).



I highly recommend this form of training. Sledgehammer swinging will improve anaerobic endurance, rotational strength, forearm and grip strength, and coordination. You will not find a more effective training device for less than \$30.

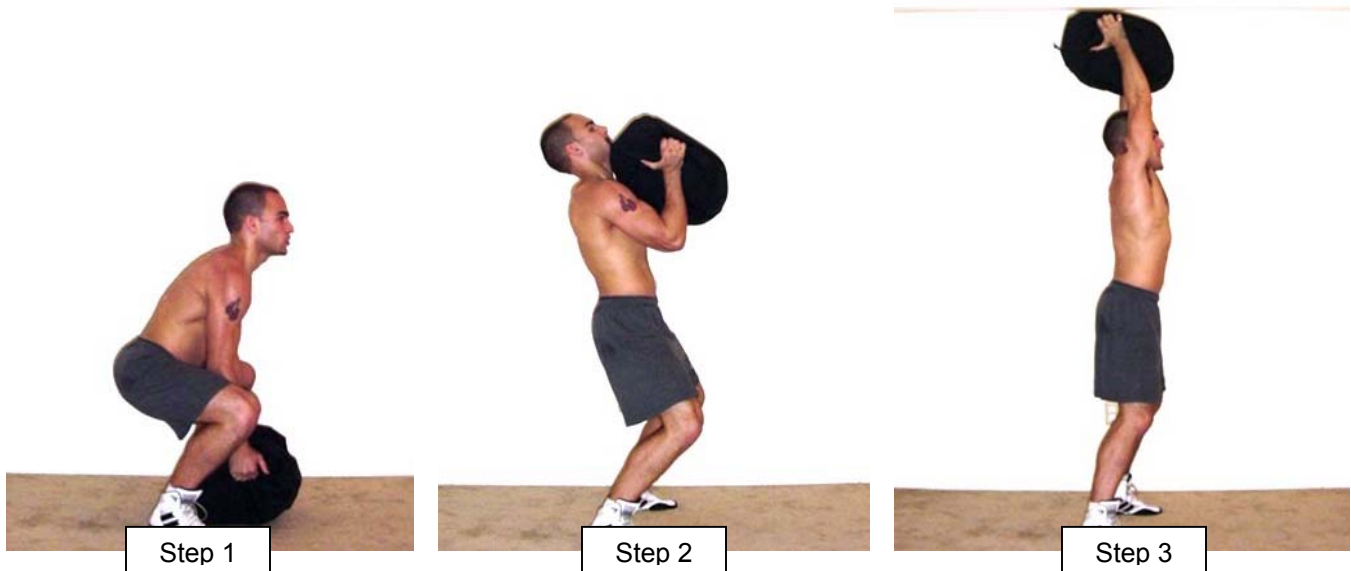
SANDBAG TRAINING

Sandbag training is another inexpensive, unconventional method of training. I recently purchased 150 pounds of sand for \$7. I filled small sandwich bags with the sand and secured the ends with duct tape. I then placed the bags into a large duffle bag. It is easy to adjust the weight by simply adding or removing the sandwich bags filled with sand.

You can perform numerous movements with the sandbag. The sandbag power clean and press is one of the best movements you will ever perform. Squats are also excellent. Throw the bag over your shoulder and perform a squat as you would with a barbell. The weight will be displaced unevenly throughout the bag, which will force you to balance yourself throughout the movement.

Below I have illustrated one of my favorite exercises with the sandbag...

Power Clean and Press – One of the best exercises you can perform with the sandbag (or with any weight) is the Power Clean and Press. Bend at the knees and clean the sandbag to your shoulders. Catch the bag in a partial squat position as you complete the clean. From this position (Step 2), press the bag overhead before returning to the starting position.



*Photos take from **Medicine Ball Training and Then Some...**

Check out [Ultimate Training For The Ultimate Warrior](#) for a complete resource on unconventional, yet highly effective methods of strength training and conditioning.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Kermit Cintron is an up and coming Welterweight prospect who possesses unusual power for his 147-pound frame. He has quickly mounted an impressive 19-0 record (18 KOs). Kermit follows an intense strength and conditioning program created by John Schaeffer, owner of the **Winning Factor Personal Training Center** in Pennsylvania. John has too many credentials to list, but a few include:

- Director of Powerlifting Sciences, ISSA
- Set 18 national and world powerlifting records
- Named United States Powerlifter of the Year in 1991
- Trainer of Anthony Clark, four time World's Strongest Man
- 5 time World Full Contact Fighting Champion
- Trainer of women's 2000 Olympic swim team gold medallists, and many professional and world-class athletes

As you can see, John Schaeffer knows what he is doing. Fortunately, I was able to speak with him in detail about his work with Kermit and other champion athletes. I quickly learned about John's emphasis on continuous improvement in training.

Continuous improvement is an important concept for boxers. Unfortunately, many fighters fail to follow this training approach. A continuous improvement system is just what the name implies. The system emphasizes continuous improvements throughout all aspects of training.

John Schaeffer strongly believes that a fighter should become stronger and faster for each fight. If the fighter fails to improve for each fight, he is doing something wrong. Unfortunately, very few fighters train with this approach. It is common for a fighter to train very hard in preparation for a bout. During this time, the fighter improves strength, sharpens skills, and maximizes performance. There are no secrets regarding the need for hard work when preparing to fight...

Consider **The Boxer's Guide To Performance Enhancement**... I have outlined a periodized approach to boxing training. The program gradually increases intensity throughout the training cycle. You will gradually become stronger and faster, until you are ready to fight. Many fighters follow such a system, but fail to improve for each bout.

Why does this happen?

The answer is simple. A fighter will train hard for 12 weeks. Following his fight, he will regress to where he was before the 12-week training camp. Without naming names, I am sure you are all familiar with many high-profile professional fighters who are known to balloon in weight between fights. The fighter will box at Welterweight, but walk around as a Light Heavyweight in between bouts. When a new fight date is determined, the fighter must then spend his time losing weight, as opposed to increasing explosive power and speed.

These fighters follow a pattern of improvement, followed by regression. This problem is much more common with professional boxers than those in the amateur ranks. Amateurs box much more frequently. An amateur fighter may fight several times in one month. The fighter cannot afford to be out of the gym, so he trains on a year-round schedule. Many professionals become accustomed to training hard for a fight, and then resting until a new fight is arranged. This is a MISTAKE!

Kermit stays in the gym on a year-round basis. His trainers have created a program that focuses on continuous improvements. Their goal is to increase his strength and power for each fight. Kermit does not take months off from training in between bouts. He returns to the gym and starts over with a new training cycle.

As a fighter, you should follow a similar approach. You should remain inside the gym, regardless of your fight schedule. You should focus on continuous improvements on a daily basis. Very few fighters train with a specific purpose. I have trained at boxing gyms across the country. Regardless of the location, I continue to observe fighters who train without a specific purpose. These boxers train the same way, week after week, with no emphasis on increasing intensity.

I am sure that you all know a fighter who trains the same way, day after day, week after week. For example, many fitness books preach a program such as:

- 3 rounds of shadow boxing
- 3 rounds of heavy bag work
- 3 rounds on the double end bag
- 3 rounds on the speed bag
- 3 rounds on the jump rope

At first glance, you may look at this basic routine and not notice any problems. This is a common introductory boxing training schedule. The problem with this program is the lack of progression. What happens when this program becomes

too easy? How do you know if you are actually improving? How do you know whether you are getting faster or stronger?

This program will not answer these questions. You need to step up and start training with a purpose. You need to start tracking your workouts in a training log. You must monitor progress and improvements. For example, consider your roadwork program. I hope that I have convinced you about the importance of interval training. At this point, I am confident that many of you have been running intervals on a weekly basis. Now, let's take it to another level.

How do you know if you have actually improved your condition? Perhaps you "feel" stronger, but let's start putting our results down on paper, so we have an accurate way to monitor improvements. You should begin timing your interval runs. Suppose you run 6 x 400 meter intervals with 1-minute rest between each interval. Keep track of your time for each 400-meter interval. Write it down on a piece of paper. After 4 weeks of interval training, you should be running these intervals faster. You can also record your heart rate between intervals. For example, your heart rate may be jumping through the roof after your first 400-meter session. Record your heart rate between each interval. In 4 weeks, you should notice that your heart rate returns to normal pace much faster.

When you record results on paper, you have evidence of your improvements. If you are strength training, you should record the amount of weight you are lifting. After six weeks, your strength should improve. You should have proof written down in your training log. If you are hitting the bag, have someone count how many punches you have thrown each round. You should improve this number throughout your training cycle.

The mind can be very deceiving. You may think that you are improving, when you are not. Use a pen and paper to monitor results. Make it a point to improve your "numbers" for each fight. After you fight, forget about regressing back to where you started. Focus on improving yourself for each fight. Your running times should become faster, your weight lifting strength should improve, your punch output should improve, and so on... You should monitor each form of training. It may sound like a pain in the ass at first, but make this part of your daily routine. You will be surprised at the improvements that you can make when you focus on improving yourself. Don't just say that you "train hard". Let's see some proof by recording your results on paper.

Below is an article about Kermit Cintron training program:

The Sweet Scientist: John Schaeffer, A Pioneer in Sports Conditioning

http://tainobox.com/en/article/7_0_1_0_C

SUPPLEMENT INFO

ATX BOXING SUPPLEMENTS

A company named ATX - Athletic Nutrition Technology, produces two supplements that are marketed towards competitive boxers. There is more information available at <http://www.atxsport.com/>

The ATX site lists the following information regarding the two supplements...

ATX BOXING PRE-WORKOUT FORMULA

This is specifically designed to maximize:

- Hand Speed
- Foot Speed
- Punching Power
- Endurance
- Resistance to Tissue Damage
- Reaction Time

ATX BOXING RECOVERY FORMULA

Helps the body recover and rebuild after heavy training or a tough boxing match. This is specifically designed to target the parts of the body that need it:

- Reduces Recovery Time
- Helps Repair Tissue Damage
- Helps Reduce Swelling
- Stimulates Immune System

The CEO of ATX recently contacted me about sampling the product. He agreed to provide a sample of each product for my evaluation and review. Please note that I have **NO AFFILIATION** with this company. I agreed to sample the product and eventually provide a review to ATX.

ATX BOXING PRE-WORKOUT FORMULA

The ATX Boxing Pre-Workout formula includes 200 capsules. The recommend serving size is 5 capsules per workout. There are several distributors of this product, which are listed on the ATX site. The cheapest that I was able to locate was Title Boxing, who sells each bottle for \$26.99.

For my evaluation, I began with 4 capsules per workout. By dropping my consumption to 4 per workout, the bottle will last 50 workouts. At \$26.99 per bottle, that puts the price at approximately \$.54 cents per workout. If you choose to train with 5 capsules per workout, the cost increases to \$.67 cents per workout. I trained with 5 capsules during two workouts. I did not notice a huge difference between 4 and 5 capsules. Both quantities were effective. I weigh approximately 150 pounds.

I used this product for two weeks. During this time, I trained 6 days per week. I performed a morning and evening session. Morning sessions were divided between interval running, conditioning drills, and plyometrics. Evening workouts were conducted at the boxing gym, consisting of activities such as bag work, mitt work, sparring, jump rope, bodyweight calisthenics, conditioning drills, and plyometrics. I would rate my training intensity as above average.

During this two-week period, I used the product before my evening session. I find that using it two times per day is too expensive.

I was impressed with the ATX product. I noticed that my recovery between rounds was improved, as was my overall energy level. I train with 3-minute rounds followed by a 30-second rest periods. My first day with the product, I worked through 8 rounds on the mitts followed by 4 hard rounds on the heavy bag with HIGH intensity combination punching. This equates to 12 consecutive rounds of training with 30-second rest intervals between rounds. I also performed 6 rounds of jump rope and a complete bodyweight callisthenic workout. My total workout lasted approximately 2 hours with minimal rest. My energy levels remained constant throughout the workout.

At \$26.99, I would rate the ATX product as a worthwhile investment. It is less expensive than BodyQUICKEN with many of the same benefits. The ATX supplement appears to be more of a physical enhancement supplement, while BodyQUICKEN focuses on both physical and cognitive functions..

The ATX supplement has been designed specifically for athletic endeavors. If I had to choose between ATX and BodyQUICKEN, I would choose ATX.

Although I enjoy both supplements, I like the fact that ATX is only \$26.99. One bottle can last between 40 and 50 days depending on your dosage.

ATX BOXING RECOVERY FORMULA

The ATX Boxing Recovery formula also contains 200 capsules per bottle. The recommend dosage is 5 capsules. As with the Pre-Workout formula, I choose to use 4 instead. The Recovery formula is priced at \$26.99 as well.

During my evaluation, I used the Recovery formula immediately following my evening workout. I did not use the Recovery formula following my morning workout. It would be very expensive to use the Recovery formula twice per day. My evening workout is also longer and more intense than my morning session.

I used the supplement immediately following my workout, and was able to wake up fresh for my morning workout. I would then take the Pre-Workout formula before my evening session. By doing so, I erased any fatigue that I may have been feeling from my morning session.

This schedule worked quite well during the 2-week trial. I trained very hard and recovered nicely. It is important to note that I always follow a healthy nutritional plan, which includes additional supplements. During the two-week period however, I did not consume any other supplements, with the exception of a multi-vitamin/mineral capsule and flax oil.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I would definitely place my stamp of approval on the ATX supplements. Both products are effective and reasonably priced. The goal of ATX is to deliver a complete supplement that will meet the needs of today's boxers. ATX wants to deliver one product for pre-workout and one product for post-workout. By doing so, a boxer can stick with one product line, rather than popping 20 different pills per day.

If I had to choose between the Pre-Workout and Recovery formula, I would select the Pre-Workout product. I follow a very healthy nutritional plan so I recover quickly between workouts. I will continue to supplement with vitamins, minerals, and flax oil.

To conclude, these supplements are worth a try.

BODYQUICKEN - BRAINQUICKEN

DOES THIS STUFF REALLY WORK?

BodyQUICKEN (aka Cognamine) is marketed as the only laboratory tested neural speed performance product to be validated by Olympic and World Champion athletes from 10 sports. It is said to produce immediate effects on reaction speed, speed output, and speed-strength endurance within 30-60 minutes of the first dose.

After reading about the supplement, I became interested in the product. I signed up for a free trial and received a one-week supply (I am not sure if this free trial is still available). After training with the product, I was quite impressed. I noticed immediate improvements in alertness and overall anaerobic and aerobic endurance. I was still hesitant to purchase the product for \$50 per bottle. I took advantage of a 20% discount available with a purchase of 2 bottles. Each bottle includes 90 capsules. The cost for two bottles is \$79.95. The recommended dose is 2-4 capsules per workout. I have had success using only 2 or 3.

The company recommends cycling the product. They suggest you supplement with BodyQUICKEN on a 5:2 schedule meaning 5 days on, 2 days off.

For those of you that are unfamiliar with the product, I have included excerpts from a previous article that is available on the RossBoxing site...

As featured by CBS, BodyQUICKEN is an effective, science-driven neural accelerator. It will significantly increase reaction time and endurance. BodyQUICKEN has been designed for fast-acting improvement of neural cognitive function. It is used...

- As a strength training supplement to improve muscle fiber recruitment and force output
- To increase reaction speeds
- As a fat-loss agent
- To improve oxygen delivery and uptake

BodyQUICKEN is the product of 6 years of research and testing, and is considered by pharmacology and physiology PhDs to be the strongest and most rapid-acting cognitive performance aid available today. BodyQUICKEN is a safe and cost-effective replacement for generally-available stimulant products,

providing superior neural performance effects and essential cerebro-active components. BodyQUICKEN enables sustained stimulant effects without the typically associated side-effects.

IS IT WORTH IT?

I was skeptical (as I am with any supplement) of this product's claims. After using the supplement however, I will testify to the results (at least in the short term). I have not used the product long enough to determine if it remains effective after several months of use.

If you are considering the product, I recommend trying it. The company is offering a 110% guarantee. If you purchase the product and don't like it, BodyQUICKEN will give you a 100% refund of your purchase price plus an additional 10% (110% money back guarantee). I would not have purchased the product if they did not offer the money back guarantee. I figured I had nothing to lose if it did not work the way I hoped. If you want to read more about the product, you can visit the [BodyQUICKEN Website](#).

WHAT ABOUT BODYQUICKEN vs. ATX?

This is a difficult question... I recently stated that I prefer ATX to BodyQUICKEN. With this said, both products offer similar results. I have enjoyed success with both products. The primary advantage of ATX is cost-effectiveness. ATX is less expensive and provides similar benefits.

Please note though that as with any supplement, eventually your body will grow accustomed to the ingredients. You should not supplement with these products forever. It is best to cycle the use of each to avoid staleness and limited response. For example, you could train with ATX for 1 month and BodyQUICKEN the next. The ingredients are different between the two supplements so you can expect to generate a response when following such a cycling pattern.

FINAL WORDS OF ADVICE

No supplement will ever take the place of **hard work** in the gym. There are no magic pills for boxing training. Do not rely on a pill for your strength and conditioning. Whether or not you supplement, you will need to bust your ass in the gym. Hard work separates champions from pretenders. Separate yourself from the pretenders and rely on your work in the gym. The only "supplement" that you should become addicted to is HARD WORK!

L-TYROSINE

L-TYROSINE: A QUALITY SUPPLEMENT

Choosing the right combination of food can control mental performance. L-tyrosine and L-Tryptophan are two amino acids, which compete to control brain functions. The brain uses L-Tyrosine to synthesize the neurotransmitters norepinephrine and dopamine. These neurotransmitters are important for clear thinking, long-term memory, and feelings of alertness and stability.

The brain uses L-Tryptophan to synthesize the neurotransmitter serotonin. Serotonin slows down reaction time, regulates satiety (the satisfied feeling you have after eating), and induces sleep. Serotonin has even been called "The Sleep Hormone".

L-Tyrosine is found in protein-rich foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, and beans. It serves as a nutritional stimulant to the brain. L-Tryptophan is found in foods as bananas, sunflowers seeds, and milk. L-Tryptophan slows down mental functions.

If L-Tyrosine reaches the brain before L-tryptophan, it will prime your brain to function at maximum performance levels throughout the day. If L-Tryptophan reaches the brain first, it will stimulate the production of serotonin causing mental performance to suffer.

OK, OK, ENOUGH OF THE FANCY WORDS...

Let's talk about what all this means for training. To summarize, L-Tyrosine is a great supplement to take first thing in the morning with breakfast. I have been using the supplement for quite some time and can testify to its benefits. I purchased two bottles for \$14.99 at my local GNC. Each bottle has 60 capsules and you only need 1 per day. The supplement is inexpensive and effective to help you "wake up" and "stay up" throughout the day.

SUPPLEMENTATION ADVICE

I am an advocate of sports performance nutrition and supplementation. A proper nutritional plan and supplementation schedule is important when training to maximize performance. The sport of boxing requires a tremendous amount of hard work. Do not throw away your hard work with a poor diet. Intense training will increase your body's demands for valuable nutrients. These nutrients are imperative for energy and recovery. Failure to eat properly will often lead to over-training and fatigue.

I have received several emails in the past from "self-proclaimed" experts who argue that sports supplements are a waste of time and money. The most common argument is that the old-timers such as Rocky Marciano did not need supplements to be the best. This is an interesting argument that is worth exploring...

I agree that many past champions excelled without supplementation and proper nutrition. More importantly however, you must realize that whether or not past champions used nutritional supplements is irrelevant now. We live in a new era.

Today's athletes are bigger, stronger, faster, and more powerful. There is no denying this fact. It is not a coincidence that today's athletes often compete as professionals at age 40 and older. Football players are bigger and stronger. Linemen commonly weigh over 300 pounds and run the 40-yard dash in less than 5 seconds. Evander Holyfield may be past his prime, but can still beat the great majority of the division. If you are a baseball fan, look at Roger Clemens and Nolan Ryan. Nolan Ryan was throwing well above 90 mph as a 40-year old man. These advancements in strength, conditioning, and longevity did not happen by accident. There was a time when a professional football player could play the line at 220 pounds. Today's athletes would topple over these men. All the courage in the world would do little to stop the explosive athletes of today. Proper nutrition and supplementation are important when training to be the best.

DEPENDENCE VS. ASSISTANCE

It is equally important that you do not become DEPENDENT on a particular supplement. Supplementation can become mentally addictive. I see this happen all the time. Athletes begin to believe that they "need" a particular supplement to perform.

The argument about Rocky Marciano and other past champions is outdated, but still has relevance. These athletes did not depend on any supplement. As a boxer, you must use supplementation and nutrition to **assist** your conditioning and recovery. Do not **rely** on any supplement.

In the past, I have voiced my opinions regarding energy supplements such as ephedrine. Although ephedrine can cause many health problems, this is not my primary reason for discrediting the supplement. I have seen athletes become mentally dependent on ephedrine and the energy that it provides. These athletes convince themselves that they **NEED** the supplement to be their best. This is nonsense. Never rely on any supplement. Rely on your skills and conditioning. Use the supplements to help you recover between workouts.

There is a fine line between proper supplementation and “dependent supplementation”. Your mind can either help or hurt you. Many athletes allow themselves to become dependent on a pill or powder.

There is no such thing as a magic pill. No supplement will make you a world champion. The only way you will become a champion is through hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. Your hands will make you a champion, not the energy pill that you pop before working out.

Do not let your mind fool you into becoming dependent on a pill or powder. I am 99% sure that some of you have become “dependent” on a supplement at one point in time. I myself have battled with these thoughts in the past. The mind can play tricks on you. Boxing is a mental sport. Use your mind to your advantage.

Depend on your hands...

INSIDE THE KITCHEN

Here are some quick tips you can use when preparing your protein shakes...

Substitute frozen, unsweetened berries for ice cubes to add flavor to your protein shake. I enjoy adding unsweetened, frozen strawberries to my chocolate or vanilla protein shake. The berries add some much needed flavor and variety to your protein shakes.

Another way to add flavor to your vanilla protein shake is by adding a scoop of Crystal Light. Crystal Light is a low calorie soft drink mix manufactured by Kraft. Crystal Light is a great alternative to high sugar juices. It tastes great and packs as few as 5 calories per serving.

STAY HYDRATED

It is as important to stay hydrated when training. If you are competing and drying out to make weight, I recommend a bottle of Pedialyte.

Pedialyte is specially formulated to promote quick absorption and contains an appropriate, clinically proven balance of fluid and electrolytes. Doctors often prescribe Pedialyte to infants who suffer from diarrhea and dehydration. Pedialyte will hydrate the body more effectively than sports drinks and water alone. Many sports drinks contain large amounts of sugar. The sugar can draw water into the intestines and away from the rest of the body.

If you are having difficulty making weight, and are limiting fluids, consider supplementing with Pedialyte immediately after your weigh-in.

GREEN TEA = GREAT STUFF!

Green tea is recognized as one of the most powerful antioxidants. Green tea's most active compounds are a trio of antioxidants called catechins. These catechins have been estimated to be as much as 100 times more powerful than vitamin C at protecting proteins and DNA from oxidative damage. They are 25 times more powerful than vitamin E. You may want to consider adding green tea to your supplement schedule. Green tea capsules are inexpensive and effective.

CREATINE WITHOUT WEIGHT GAIN

The link below pertains to creatine supplementation without weight gain. I encourage you to read the entire article to learn the specifics about creatine supplementation. One interesting paragraph from this article reads as follows:

"The best way to take it is to simply sprinkle about a half-gram of the stuff on some food (and then of course eat the creatine and comestible) six times per day. Little creatine will be lost in the urine and feces, creating a very economical intake pattern, little weight will be gained, and the resulting heightened intramuscular creatine-phosphate concentration should have a direct, positive impact on the quality of your high-intensity training sessions."

<http://www.pponline.co.uk/encyc/0864.htm>

LESSONS LEARNED

WHO SAID AGE MATTERS?

“Ross, am I too old to start boxing?”

If I had a nickel for every time someone asked this question, I would be a rich man. I receive this question on a monthly basis. Two years ago, an aspiring boxer approached me with this exact question. He was a 27-year-old amateur boxer concerned about his age. He spoke to me in October of 2001.

Why do I remember this question?

It is easy to remember, as I had just returned from New York City after watching Bernard Hopkins (36 years old at the time) dismantle previously unbeaten Felix Trinidad. Hopkins entered the ring as the underdog. He exited the ring as the undisputed Middleweight champion. Before the bout, very few boxing analysts believed the 36-year-old had enough in his tank to defeat the younger Trinidad. On September 29th, Bernard Hopkins proved that age was only a number.

Fast forwarding to December 2003, Bernard Hopkins continues to defy the odds. He is now 38, with his 39th birthday just around the corner in January. Surely, he is over the hill now... right?

Wrong!

On December 13th, Bernard Hopkins brutalized former champion William Joppy. Hopkins became stronger as the fight progressed, finishing with a punishing 12th round that left Joppy's face a swollen mess.

How does Bernard Hopkins continue to defy the odds? What is his secret to longevity?

There are no secrets. Bernard Hopkins is the champion for a reason, he works for it! He lives a clean lifestyle, stays in shape on a year-round basis, and never lets his weight fluctuate. Bernard Hopkins is a consummate professional. Unfortunately, not all fighters are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to become a champion...

There are several reasons why certain fighters become less effective with age. The training regimen of a competitive fighter is physically (and mentally) draining. As the years pass by, certain fighters lose their passion for the sport. It becomes difficult to stay motivated. These fighters put on extra weight between bouts. They struggle to make weight, often leaving their energy on the scales. Rapid fluctuations in weight take its toll on a fighter. These actions can "age" a fighter.

Many fighters are "old" boxers, while remaining "young" in years. A fighter can be ruined in the gym. Continuous "gym wars" add mileage to the fighter. You cannot spar at full throttle on a year-round basis without burning out. You must cycle your training to balance intensity, employing lighter days and active rest when needed. By doing so, you will stay fresh, physically AND mentally.

If you are serious about this sport (or anything else in life), do not listen to anyone who says, "It is too late." Bernard Hopkins has lived with his share of critics. Did he succumb to their criticisms? Did he allow their negative comments to influence him?

NO!

Bernard Hopkins made a decision. He decided to become the best Middleweight boxer alive. His age has not stopped him. The work required is not easy, but it is feasible if you dedicate yourself to continuous improvement.

Forget about age. Let's focus on improvements. We all have dreams, yet we all have doubters. Forget the critics. Bernard Hopkins does not worry about his age, so why should you?

Cherie Carter-Scott once said the following:

"Ordinary people believe only in the possible. Extraordinary people visualize not what is possible or probable, but rather what is impossible. And by visualizing the impossible, they begin to see it as possible."

Remember those words when you question your ability to succeed...

BOXING STRATEGY

RING NERVES

I have received several questions regarding pre-fight nerves and how to overcome such feelings. Many fighters become nervous before a bout or sparring session. These feelings are common in boxing. Unlike team sports such as basketball or baseball, you are alone inside the ring.

We “play” baseball but we do not “play” boxing. Boxing is a difficult sport. The training required is very intense, as is the competition. If I lose a baseball game, I can return to the field the next day with my glove and bat. In boxing, a loss can mean that I was knocked unconscious. We are all aware of the potential dangers associated with boxing. No one wishes to be knocked out or defeated in front of family or friends. For this reason, it is natural to become nervous.

All fighters have been nervous at one time. I receive several questions about how to avoid pre-fight nerves. Unfortunately, this is the wrong question to ask. Instead, the question should read as follows, “How can I deal with my nervous feelings?”

Rather than trying to rid yourself of nervous feelings, your objective must be learning to quell these feelings without impeding performance. How is this objective achieved? Unfortunately, there is no magic answer. We cannot snap our fingers and suddenly overcome these feelings. The best way to overcome nervousness is through experience. To be successful in boxing, you must be strong both physically and mentally. Boxing is a complex sport. It is known as the “Sweet Science” for many reasons, one being the mental aspect of the sport.

As fighters, we must decide how bad we want success. If you are nervous, it means that you care about your performance. If you did not care about losing, there would be no reason to be nervous. These feelings are normal. We ALL go through them. Even those fighters that show no emotion are going through the same feelings as you. The only difference is that they have learned to hide these feelings. Boxing is a like a poker game. You must put on your poker face before, during, and after the fight. If you show your opponent fear, he (or she) will gain the mental advantage.

You must keep your feelings inside and learn to perform despite these feelings.

Your opponent is just as nervous as you are. Forget about how tough he looks, he is a human being just like you. Through experience, you will learn to rely on your skills and physical conditioning. If you train hard, there is no reason to be scared. Let your conditioning and training drive you towards victory.

It is okay to be nervous about the fight, but not acceptable to question your training. Never enter a fight questioning whether you trained hard enough. Often a fighter will stand at the weigh-in and start thinking *"If I had only run more..."* or *"If I had only sparred more..."*

If you train hard and train smart, these thoughts will disappear. Your decision to train hard cannot be made the day before the fight. You must prepare yourself each and every day if you wish to be successful.

To summarize, it is okay to be nervous, as long as you have prepared yourself at the gym. There is no substitute for hard work. There are no short cuts in boxing. The road to the top is a long journey that involves many long nights of training. When you choose to travel this road, you learn to overcome your mind. You realize that no one has trained as hard as you. You are ready to face and overcome obstacles, including your own mind.

Confidence is very important in boxing. The best way to develop confidence is through experience and hard work. When you train hard, you begin to notice others around you who do not train with your intensity. You realize that only a select few make the sacrifice to be successful in boxing. When you make this sacrifice, your confidence grows and your nervousness fades.

No one said that boxing would be easy. You must rise up to the challenge, stare fear in the eye, and refuse to lose. The biggest risk is not "risking".

CONFIDENCE

Below is a quote from Middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins. Bernard made these comments during a Boxingtalk.net interview while preparing for a title defense...

"I'm always going to come in (to the fight) overconfident and I have a reason to. I always come in overconfident, because I train so hard that I leave no room for doubt in my mind. I never go in there to lose. The word is not even in my dictionary. I train confident, and I train to think overconfidently. If I didn't, I'd be a fool... I will be extremely overconfident for this fight because I know how hard I'm going to prepare myself to get ready for this fight."

It is very important to read what Bernard has to say about his physical and mental preparation. Whether you are a fan of the man or not, there is no denying his unbelievable physical condition. Bernard Hopkins always comes to fight. Bernard is living proof that age is just a number. At age 38, he trains with the energy of a man half his age

Many fighters lack confidence. These fighters enter the dressing room with doubts running through their heads.

"Did I do enough roadwork?"

"Did I get enough sparring?"

"If I only had one more week to train..."

These thoughts run rampant in the dressing room before a bout. It is common for a young fighter to ponder these thoughts before the fight.

What about Bernard Hopkins? Do you think he questions his training?

NOPE!

Bernard is a seasoned veteran. He prepares for each opponent as if it were the biggest fight in his life. You can learn from Bernard. There is nothing wrong with being nervous, but you should still possess confidence in your ability and training.

You must raise the bar when training. Separate yourself from the competition. Every fighter runs, hits the bag, and spars. What differentiates you from the others? This is not a question that I can answer. Only you can decide.

When you are working through conditioning drills, it is easy to quit. These drills hurt like hell. What about interval running? If you run intervals hard, they can leave you feeling nauseous.

Perhaps you didn't get enough sleep last night. Should you skip your morning run?

Hell no! You need to tough it out. You need to feel the pain in the gym. Make the fight feel easy in comparison to the hard work that you have endured while training. So many fighters just *go through the motions*. A few rounds of bag work, a few rounds of jump rope, and that's a wrap.

Separate yourself from mediocrity. Training is supposed to feel tough. If you were looking for the easy way out, you would not be boxing. You would be happy with a 20-minute session of Tae-Bo. Everyone wants to be the best, but very few train hard enough to be the best. Guys are always telling me that they "have the heart of a champion".

One good body shot can give them a complete change of heart.

I do not want to turn this into a preaching session, so let's wrap up this topic. If you want to be the best, you must train the best. You will need to bust your ass in the gym. There are going to be days when you are sore and tired. There are going to be days when you do not want to run. There will be days when you are tempted to skip a training session. Everyone thinks this way at one time or another. You must decide if you will act on these thoughts.

Put the work in at the gym. You can always rest after the fight!

CUBAN BOXING

"How does (any world champion) train? Does he lift weights? What does his training program look like?"

These are common questions asked by young, aspiring boxers. There is a continuous search for the training routines of former, current, and future world champions...

"If I train with the champion's program, I can become a champion..."

These words are voiced by many young fighters. These fighters search for new training devices, often spending hundreds of dollars on training equipment. The quest for a "better" training device or training system is never-ending.

I've received questions from boxers who seek information on the training programs of several world champions. Examples include, *"How does Mike Tyson train?"* ... *"How does Roy Jones train?"* ... and so on.

One question that I have never received is, *"How do the Cuban amateurs train?"*

I find it odd that no one has inquired about the Cuban's amateur boxing program. Could it be because the country is small with little money? Could it be that the country lacks the hi-tech training equipment and facilities common in the USA?

Despite these truths, Cuba's amateur boxing program continues to dominate the International circuit.

Cuba is small. They do not have anywhere near as many athletes to choose from in comparison to larger countries. Cuba does not have the financial support of many Olympic training programs. There are no lucrative, hi-tech training facilities. The athletes are poor, and hungry. Their hunger is for much more than food however. These athletes are hungry for success inside the ring.

Cuba's dominance is living proof that you can do a lot with a little. You do not need the most elaborate training facility to excel in this sport. You do not need expensive training equipment. All that you need is the desire to win, coupled with a knowledgeable trainer.

I grew up training at the San Juan Center boxing club in Hartford, Connecticut. We didn't have weights or Nautilus machines. We had old heavy bags and worn out boxing gloves. We never had fancy equipment, but we always produced champions at the amateur and professional level.

Boxers from surrounding areas always knew they would have a tough fight if they were matched against someone from the San Juan Center. We did a lot with a little (equipment).

How do you get by without elaborate training equipment?

Use the Cuban boxing program as an example. These fighters hit the bag hard and often. They work together on partner drills. They follow strict roadwork programs without missing days. They spar hard and often. They work through calisthenics on a daily basis.

Perhaps most importantly, these fighters compete regularly. They box in tournaments frequently. There is no substitute for real world experience. You need to step inside the ring to practice the combinations that you've mastered on the bags. The heavy bag doesn't hit back. It doesn't counter punch, feint, and side-step. It stands still as you beat it relentlessly.

You need to get inside the ring with another well-trained fighter to truly develop the skills of this sport.

You will not need equipment for a sprint session, a hill workout, or an interval session at the track. You won't need much equipment for an interval session on the heavy bag. You won't need any equipment for a sprint workout that integrates burpees and pushups after each 100-meter sprint.

I can answer the following question with one sentence...

Question - How do the Cubans train?

Answer - The Cubans train hard.

To expand upon the answer, the Cubans dedicate their lives to boxing. They eat, sleep, and dream boxing. There are no distractions. They do not stay up late watching television or playing video games. They wake up in the morning and run hard at the track. They train hard at the gym. They spar, hit the bags, and drill new combinations and skills.

These fighters train with heart. They don't have fancy equipment or expensive supplements. They make up for their lack of equipment by overcompensating with heart, desire, and diligence.

Learn from the best. Observe the Cuban boxers in the Olympics this summer. Watch and learn. They are the best amateur boxers in the world.

To learn about the history of Cuban boxing, check out the articles below:

All About Cuba - Boxing

<http://www.cubasports.com/english/boxeo.asp>

History of Cuban Boxing Part I

<http://www.ibhof.com/ibhfcuba1.htm>

History of Cuban Boxing Part II

<http://www.ibhof.com/ibhfcuba2.htm>

Cuban Boxers Pack Punches With Ideology

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_16-6-2004_pg2_26

Cuban Boxers - The Secret To Their Success

<http://www.eastsideboxing.com/news/mollet1709.php>

LEARN BY WATCHING

Although the following bouts have already taken place, the lessons learned from these fights will last a lifetime.

November of 2002 was a great month for the sport of boxing. There were several mega bouts including Marco Antonio Barrera vs. Johnny Tapia, Erik Morales vs. Paulie Ayala, and Micky Ward vs. Arturo Gatti. It is important to watch fights of this magnitude. These fights offer you a chance to learn from the best in our sport.

WARD VS. GATTI II

Arturo Gatti boxed a tactical fight en route to a one-sided victory over Micky Ward. Gatti demonstrated that boxing is not just about “being tough”. Instead, Gatti listened to his corner and stuck to the game plan. All fighters have certain strengths and weaknesses. A successful boxer will not just possess speed and power; he will fight a smart fight. Gatti is no more talented than he was when he lost to Ward in May. The difference between these two bouts was that Gatti listened to his trainer and executed the game plan.

In case you missed the fight, let’s review what happened. In their first bout, Micky Ward was able to bait Gatti into a war on the inside. Micky Ward is a powerful body puncher who needs to fight on the inside. In their first bout, Arturo Gatti abandoned his plan by allowing Ward to fight HIS FIGHT. As the superior boxer, Gatti needed to use lateral movement and box from angles. In the rematch, Arturo Gatti learned from his mistake and followed the game plan to perfection. Ward’s strength is on the inside. Gatti took away Ward’s strength by constantly moving and boxing from angles. Micky Ward’s patented left hook was all but a distant memory in their second bout.

Each time Ward got inside, Gatti ducked low, which prevented Ward from landing any meaningful punches. Ward could not land his bread and butter body shot. Meanwhile, Arturo Gatti stayed busy on the outside. Another important observation was how Arturo Gatti worked the body. Going into this fight, we all knew that Micky Ward possessed a wicked body shot. Ward is a strong fighter who is able to stay busy from start to finish. Gatti was successful in slowing Ward down with an effective body attack. Body punching is one of the most neglected areas in boxing today. Young fighters simply do not include body punches in their arsenal.

In the amateurs, many coaches claim that body shots do not score points with the computer scoring system. These coaches do not realize how effective a solid body punch can be. Whether you are an amateur or pro, you can use a body attack to wear down your opponent. A body attack also adds much needed variety to keep your opponent guessing. If you throw the same combinations to the head repeatedly, you will not break through your opponent's defense. Not every punch needs to count on the computer scoring system. The computer does not feel the punch, but I can guarantee that your opponent will. You should look to mix in hooks, uppercuts, straight right hands, and even jabs to the body. I've had great success by jabbing to the body and following with either a left hook or straight right hand to the head. The body attack will help to draw your opponent's guard down, thus leaving his head open for attack.

Let's summarize some lessons learned from the Gatti-Ward fight:

1. Do not neglect the importance of a body attack
2. Listen to the advice from your corner
3. Do not get caught up in a brawl, stick to the game plan
4. Use angles and lateral movement to setup your attack

Another important lesson can be learned from Micky Ward who exhibited tremendous heart to continue fighting after his third round knockdown. Ward's equilibrium was gone, but he continued to fight. If you are serious about this sport, you can learn from the heart that both of these warriors displayed.

MORALES VS. AYALA

Another great bout in November was the Featherweight clash between Erik Morales and Paulie Ayala. Ayala made the jump from Super Bantamweight to Featherweight. This bout was entertaining and action packed. Both men fought with heart, but Erik Morales was simply too much.

Paulie Ayala displayed tremendous heart but could not avoid the right hand of Erik Morales. Many believed Morales to be too strong for the smaller Ayala. Although Morales is the naturally larger fighter, his size was not his reason for victory. Skills win fights, not size. Erik Morales out punched Paulie Ayala throughout the bout. He taught a class about how to fight a southpaw.

I receive many questions about strategies to fight southpaws. The old rule is to keep your left foot (*assuming you are a right handed, conventional boxer who jabs with the left*) outside of the southpaw's lead right foot. By staying on the outside, you create angle to land the straight right hand.

Boxing is all about finding and attacking from angles. You never want to square up in front of your opponent. By using angles, you become deceptive and difficult to hit. Erik Morales demonstrated the effectiveness of the right hand against a southpaw. He was able to land both the straight right hand and right uppercut. Ayala could not avoid these punches. When you are fighting a southpaw, you can often lead with the straight right hand. You can also slip (to your left) the incoming right jab, and simultaneously throw your own right hand. You can follow this counter punch with a left hook to the body or head.

Morales also utilized a brutal uppercut. The uppercut is an often-neglected punch. Few fighters include the uppercut in their arsenal. A well-timed uppercut is both powerful and difficult to defend. There is nothing worse than being hit with an uppercut that you do not see. The uppercut is an excellent punch on the inside that can be thrown to the body or head. Erik Morales showed how effective the right uppercut can be against a southpaw that lunges forward. Ayala knew that he could not beat Morales from the outside. He tried to pressure his way to the inside where he was often greeted by a powerful uppercut to the chin.

Whenever your opponent comes forward with his head down, he is asking for the uppercut. Do not neglect this important punch.

Let's summarize some lessons learned from the Morales-Ayala fight:

1. Do not neglect the importance of the uppercut
2. Use the right hand often against the southpaw
3. Use angles against the southpaw to set up your power shots

THE FALL OF A CHAMPION...

LEARN FROM HIS MISTAKES

On January 25th, 2003, Ricardo Mayorga recorded one of the biggest upsets in recent boxing history. The unknown Nicaraguan Welterweight knocked out Vernon Forrest in just three rounds. Forrest was previously unbeaten with two victories over one of boxing's best Pound for Pound fighters, Shane Mosley.

Forrest had an excellent amateur career. He is tall with a crisp jab and punching power. He is a technical boxer loaded with skill and experience. Many uneducated boxing writers were quick to call Forrest "overrated" following his knockout loss. These writers believe that watching the sport outside the ring

renders them boxing “experts”. They argue that Forrest simply possessed a style capable of defeating Shane Mosley. Unfortunately, these writers fail to recognize one of the best jabs in all of boxing (just one of Forrest’s long list of assets and abilities).

I could watch an airplane fly overhead a thousand times but would not know the first thing about how to fly a plane. This analogy holds true for 99.9% of boxing writers. They continue to criticize fighters despite having NEVER stepped inside the ring. Their opinion is worth about as much as the saliva that sits inside an old spit bucket at the gym.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FIGHT

No one believed that Ricardo Mayorga could win this fight... except for the most important person of all, Ricardo himself. Mayorga entered the ring with confidence. He was not intimidated by the experience and accomplishments of Vernon Forrest.

Ricardo Mayorga took the fight to Vernon Forrest. He could not outbox Forrest from the outside. His only opportunity for victory was to press the attack and land power punches. Mayorga jumped on Forrest as soon as the bell rang. He imposed his will on Vernon Forrest and scored a knockout.

LESSON 1: DICTATE THE PACE

Each boxer has a unique style. Some of us are sluggers, some flashy boxers, while others counter punchers. Regardless of your style, you must be sure to fight the fight that best suits your strengths. If I am an inside fighter who likes to mix it up against the ropes, it does not make sense for me to box from the outside. Instead, I must press the attack by exhibiting **Ring Generalship**. Forget about your opponent’s accomplishments. Ricardo Mayorga did not care that Vernon Forrest had two victories over Shane Mosley. Those bouts were in the past.

Intimidation is a deadly weapon. If you are intimidated before your fight, you are at a tremendous disadvantage. Often times we become overly concerned about the previous accomplishments of a future opponent. It is only natural to think, *“Well he has already won the Nationals”* or *“He is ranked in the top 10”*... You start to give your opponent too much respect, which can lead to intimidation.

We can all learn from Ricardo Mayorga. He entered his bout against one of the best fighters in the world with nothing but confidence. Forrest’s accomplishments did not “earn” him the right to dictate the tempo of the fight.

When you give too much respect to an opponent, you allow him (or her) to dictate the pace. You put yourself at an automatic disadvantage. Mayorga did not care about Forrest's past. He set the pace and mounted the attack.

LESSON 2: BE FIRST

Anyone who has been to a live boxing match has heard a trainer instruct his fighter to **"BE FIRST!"** This simple phrase tells the fighter that he must be first to mount his attack. In the sport of boxing, you win by throwing punches, not by waiting. The former champion Willie Pep once won a round without throwing a punch. He is the exception to the rule. Do not try to imitate Willie Pep by not throwing punches. Rather, you must be first and earn the respect of your opponent. Do not be afraid to throw combinations. Many new fighters hesitate too long and cannot "get their punches off". You need to establish yourself as a boxer who comes to fight.

Vernon Forrest did not intimidate Ricardo Mayorga. Mayorga jumped on Forrest. He was the first man to impose his will. He came to fight and let Forrest know this early on.

LESSON 3: YOU DO NOT PLAY BOXING

Boxing is a difficult sport with inherent dangers. It is not fun to be punched in the face. Although I have never been knocked out, I can imagine that it is not fun either. When you begin to compete at elite levels of competition, you literally put your life on the line when you step inside the ring. The referees and doctors are there to protect the fighters, but injuries can happen.

You do not "play" boxing the way you play golf or tennis. A loss in boxing can mean you were knocked unconscious. I am not trying to scare anyone; rather I am telling it like it is. If you cannot accept the risks associated with boxing, this sport is not for you.

Vernon Forrest entered the ring on January 25th with a group of friends and rappers. Forrest was laughing and smiling as he approached the ring. His friends were screaming and trying to "represent". This was not the Vernon Forrest who arrived to fight Shane Mosley.

Vernon Forrest entered the ring as a celebrity rather than a man about to put his life on the line. Meanwhile, Ricardo Mayorga waited patiently in the ring with one thing on his mind, to knockout Vernon Forrest. Mayorga was focused on the

task at hand. Forrest was concerned with putting on a show to entertain the public.

As a fighter, you must realize that you alone will shed blood and sweat. Sitting in the stands does not endanger the fans. Boxing fans do not put their lives on the line.

I realize that boxing fans are important to the sport; after all, it is their money that generates paydays for the fighters. With this said, the fans will not be by your side when you are lying in a hospital bed. It is great to be polite and respectful to your fans, but when fight time arrives, you need to say the hell with the fans.

Fans will often boo a talented fighter such as Roy Jones because he wins fights with boxing ability, instead of brawling like Ward or Gatti. The fans want to see someone get knocked out. They want to see blood. They do not know the true science of boxing so cannot appreciate the technical boxing skills of someone such as Roy Jones. This is the reason why we often hear “boos” at the fights. Vernon Forrest came to entertain rather than fight. He forgot his identity. He was a celebrity instead of a warrior who had earned a world championship.

It is important to learn from Vernon Forrest. When you are preparing to fight, forget about the fans who want to see blood and guts. You need to fight the fight that best suits your style. You need to arrive at fight night with the mindset of a warrior. You must stay focused on the task at hand. You do not need your friends cheering and talking tough. These people act like cheerleaders. They have never stepped inside the ring to fight. Vernon Forrest’s friends were rapping and posing. They don’t know the first thing about boxing. They don’t know the focus and concentration necessary for a world championship bout. Your friends may think they are helping you get “pumped” but they are mistaken. Forget all the “hype” and be prepared to FIGHT.

Ricardo Mayorga came to fight. He can entertain his fans after the fight. He was focused and stuck to his game plan. Boxing is not a sport to be taken lightly. It is a lonely place inside the ring.

Prepare yourself mentally or be prepared to lose.

KNOW THAT YOU BELONG

Let’s continue with the theme illustrated in the Forrest vs. Mayorga bout... We can learn several lessons from that night’s undercard.

Nate Campbell fought Cuba's 1992 Olympic Gold Medalist and former WBA Super Featherweight champion Joel Casamayor. In case you missed the action, Casamayor won a 10 round unanimous decision to improve his record to 29-1.

More importantly however, Nate Campbell made a statement by accepting this bout and fighting competitively until the final bell. Despite the wide margin on the judge's scorecards, the consensus among most boxing analysts agreed that the bout was extremely close. Even the HBO analysts had Campbell ahead. Yet, regardless of the outcome, an important lesson can be learned from this fight.

Nate Campbell did not start his professional career **until age 28**. He did not begin boxing as a serious amateur until age 25. Meanwhile, Joel Casamayor was a 1992 Olympic Gold Medalist with several hundred amateur fights. Campbell had approximately 36 amateur bouts. While Casamayor was busy earning his Gold Medal, Campbell was working at a grocery store in Florida.

What is the morale to this story?

The answer is simple. Nate Campbell entered his bout with confidence. He knew that he belonged in the ring with the former world champion. He was not awed at the experience and accomplishments of Joel Casamayor. He overcame a HUGE deficit in experience to fight a very competitive bout.

Nate Campbell has literally defied all of the odds. I'm sure there were plenty of naysayers along the way who told him he was too old to box. Nate Campbell refused to accept no for an answer. He kept working hard in the gym. He made up for lost time with hard work. Nate Campbell is living proof that it is never too late to succeed in this sport, or more importantly, in life.

You alone will choose your destiny. You must know that you belong. Forget about the critics, forget about the doubters, and believe in yourself. You alone will chart your future. When you enter the ring, you must do so with confidence. You must let your opponent know that you not only came to fight, but you came to **WIN**. When the bell rings, you must be ready to fight. Forget about who your opponent is. Forget about his accomplishments.

Do you think Nate Campbell sat up all night thinking about Casamayor's Gold Medal? Do you think Nate Campbell was intimidated by the experience of Joel Casamayor?

The answer is **NO**. Nate Campbell won the first three rounds of the fight by setting the tempo. He let Casamayor know early on that this would be a tough fight.

THE ULTIMATE LESSON: BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

In a past interview with Boxingtalk.net, Buddy McGirt touched upon the subject of intimidation. His statements were in reference to Clifford Etienne, whom he was training for a February 22nd bout with Mike Tyson.

"No matter what you do as a trainer, you cannot control intimidation. You never know what goes through a fighter's mind... The best thing I can do is keep (my fighter) relaxed. I try to keep him from thinking about the fight. As far as freezing up in the ring, that is something I cannot control. I cannot control a person's emotions."

McGirt makes a very important point. When you enter the ring, your trainer cannot fight for you. It is up to YOU, whether you allow your opponent to intimidate you.

A logical question would be, *"Well how do you develop confidence and prevent intimidation?"*

No magic pills will provide strength and confidence. Nate Campbell developed his confidence by continuing to train hard in the gym. You must learn to rely on your conditioning and hard work.

You cannot decide 2 days before the fight that you will dedicate yourself. **It is too late.** Your dedication must take place weeks or months before the fight.

There is nothing worse than questioning your training before the fight. We've all questioned ourselves a few days before the fight. *"If I had only done this..."* or *"If I had only done that..."*

You need to clear your mind of this negativity and believe in your abilities. Do not give your opponent so much respect. When you stare across the ring, always remember that your opponent is **just another human being**. Always remember, *"We are all created equal"...* Live by these words. Make yourself stand out by pushing yourself to the next level in the gym.

It takes time to develop confidence so get started **TODAY**. Stop putting your training off and get busy. Nate Campbell did it in just a few years. Follow his lead. Do not impose limitations on your ability. Rise up and let the warrior within come to the surface.

LEARN FROM ROY...

JOHN RUIZ VS. ROY JONES

March 1st, 2003, was a historic night in the sport of boxing. Roy Jones successfully moved from Light Heavyweight to Heavyweight to capture the WBA world championship over John Ruiz..

Roy Jones overcame a huge deficit in size and power to win a unanimous decision. John Ruiz stopped “fighting” throughout the middle rounds. It was not until desperation set in that he began to revamp an offensive attack in the final rounds. Even in desperation, Ruiz was unable to land any meaningful punches.

Many fans watched the fight and immediately called Ruiz a “paper” champion. Rather than credit Roy Jones, many were quick to criticize Ruiz. Without turning this into a bitching session, I want to point out that John Ruiz battled with Evander Holyfield on three occasions. He even sent Holyfield to the canvas, something that Lennox Lewis could not do. Ruiz also floored and defeated Kirk Johnson. Johnson is a slick boxing Heavyweight who was unbeaten before losing to Ruiz.

Ruiz is not the slickest boxer in the world. Ruiz is not the most talented fighter in the world. His greatest asset is his courage and ability to press the attack. All of his fights are “ugly” in the sense that he charges forward, clinches, and wrestles. Ruiz wears down fellow Heavyweights. His style is not pretty but it has been effective against many top fighters.

Based on Ruiz’s past, we were all certain that he would press forward and “make the fight”. Ruiz planned to initiate the action and press the attack. We all knew that he could not “outbox” Roy Jones. His key to victory was to bang with Roy. Ruiz hoped to catch Roy in the late rounds after taking the steam out of him throughout the bout. Unfortunately for Ruiz, it never happened. He did not press the attack the way he could with Evander Holyfield.

Roy Jones does not have the strength of Holyfield, so why didn’t Ruiz come forward in a similar fashion?

The answer is simple. Prior to this fight, John Ruiz did not respect Roy’s power. He told everyone that he would overpower Jones with his considerable size advantage. Roy Jones knew that Ruiz would press the attack. Jones had to earn Ruiz’s respect early on.

GET YOUR RESPECT EARLY

John Ruiz hit Jones with a powerful punch in the first round of the fight. Roy Jones kept his composure and returned the favor. He nailed Ruiz, forcing the natural Heavyweight to respect his power. Roy let Ruiz know early on that he came to fight and that he could hurt him. Now Ruiz had to think twice about wildly rushing forward. Once Ruiz tasted Roy's power, he was forced to "think" about rushing forward. Roy's speed was too much for Ruiz. Ruiz kept plodding forward without throwing punches or combinations.

In the 4th round, Roy seriously wobbled Ruiz with a wicked combination. Ruiz had to hold on, as his legs buckled. Roy Jones won the fight in the fourth round. He never looked back after hurting Ruiz. John Ruiz lost his confidence and was frozen for the remainder of the fight. Roy Jones earned his respect early on, proving that he was willing to trade punches. He proved that he could hurt the bigger man.

Once you hurt your opponent, you earn his respect. When you earn his respect, you will force him to "think" before coming forward. Boxing is a sport that requires reactions without conscious thought. You must see an opening and go for it. Your hands must know what to do without taking the time to think about it. This "see and react" mentality does not happen overnight. It takes hard work to acquire these skills.

Unfortunately for Ruiz, Roy Jones proved that it only takes one punch to take away this skill. John Ruiz became a frozen fighter after one effective punch.

Another observation from the fight is the "check-hook" that Roy Jones landed throughout the fight. My good friend, Light Heavyweight, John Scully made a great observation about the fight. Scully is still an active fighter and the trainer of 1996 Olympian Lawrence Clay-Bey. John Scully fought in the 1988 Olympic Trials. He trained out of Pensacola, Florida earlier in his career. He has trained and sparred with Roy on several occasions. This past summer I went with John to Pensacola. We went to Roy's gym as well as his father's house. His father still trains fighters at his home, the same home where Roy grew up and trained as a child.

Scully observed that Roy took control of the fight with his "check-hook". The check-hook is the left hook that Big Roy (Roy's father) teaches all of his fighters. Smoke Gainer throws the punch as well. If you watch old tapes of Lamar Parks you will also see it. When the opponent throws his right hand, a Roy Jones Sr. trained boxer will lean back away from the right hand. While he is leaning away, he will fire a short left hook, as the opponent (Ruiz) leans in. Scully observed that

Roy landed some blistering check-hooks early on, which took Ruiz's right hand away from him. Try the "check-hook" when you are sparring and you will see that it works.

Roy not only forced Ruiz to respect him, but he also took away his offense with effective counter punching.

PREPARE FOR YOUR OPPONENT

CORRIE SANDERS VS. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

On March 8th, Corrie Sanders shocked the Heavyweight division with a stunning knockout over Wladimir Klitschko. Sanders sent Klitschko to the canvas four times in just two rounds. Sanders shocked the entire division with his dominant performance. He landed his left hand at will, which proved fatal to Klitschko. Let's analyze the fight and learn what Wladimir did wrong and what Sanders did right.

First, Wladimir appeared to enter the ring completely dry, indicating that he had not properly warmed up before entering the ring. George Foreman was ringside and made this observation on the HBO telecast.

As a professional fighter, there is no excuse to enter the ring without thoroughly warming the muscles. It is a good idea to enter the ring with a light sweat. You want the muscles warm and the blood pumping when the first bell rings. Many fighters do not warm up properly, assuming they will warm up in the first few rounds. These fighters often refer to themselves as "slow starters".

Corrie Sanders entered this fight as the underdog. He had only boxed three rounds in the previous 35 months. His greatest asset was power. Sanders has always been a powerful puncher known to start fast. I am not the only person who knew this information about Corrie Sanders. In 2000, he knocked Hasim Rahman to the canvas in the 2nd round before losing the fight via a 7th round stoppage. Sanders almost knocked Rahman through the ropes in their bout with an awesome display of power.

Wladimir Klitschko should have been prepared for a fast start from Sanders. The fact that he entered the ring cold tells me one of two things...

1. *He did not study tapes of Corrie Sanders.*
2. *He did not take his opponent seriously.*

Wladimir Klitschko either overlooked his opponent or simply did not study him prior to the bout. We all expected Wladimir to walk through Sanders. Perhaps Wlad expected the same and did not take his opponent seriously. Corrie Sanders proved to the world that no one is "safe" in the sport of boxing. One punch can completely change a fight. You cannot let your guard down or take anyone for granted.

Always remember that you do not "play" boxing. The sport of boxing is similar to war. Your intention is to seek and destroy. You enter the ring looking to hurt your opponent. It does not feel good to be punched in the face. You cannot afford to overlook any opponent.

Never think that you are bigger or better than you are. We all put our pants on the same way. We are all human beings. We are all capable of being knocked out. The boxing community awed Wladimir Klitschko. His physique and power were awesome. Corrie Sanders entered the ring without the bulging muscles of Klitschko.

Wlad's physique did not help him in the bout.

Another important observation is Wlad's inability to get out of the way of the left hand. Corrie Sanders landed almost every left hand that he threw. After the bout, Wladimir mentioned that he wanted a rematch. He mentioned that he would work with more southpaws to prepare for the rematch. Such comments lead me to believe that Wladimir did NOT have an adequate amount of southpaw sparring. Once again, it appears that Wladimir made a major mistake in his preparations for the bout.

There is no excuse to not know your opponent's style. If you are fighting a fast starter, you must prepare to handle the quick start. If you are fighting a southpaw, you need to work with southpaws in the gym. Amateur boxing is different where you often do not know whom you are fighting. There is no excuse in the professionals. Even in the amateurs, you often will have an opportunity to study your opponent. For example, if you are fighting in a tournament, always make it a point to stick around and watch the other fighter's in your weight class.

If Wladimir Klitschko had done his homework, he would have known that Sanders was a fast starter. He would have entered the ring warm, ready to weather the storm. Klitschko should have focused on establishing his jab while avoiding the power punches of Sanders. If you are fighting a fast starter, why try to fight his fight? It does not make sense. Take the fight into the late rounds to give yourself the advantage. Do whatever is necessary to ensure victory.

KLITSCHKO VS. BREWSTER

On April 10th, 2004, Wladimir Klitschko and Lamon Brewster battled for the WBO Heavyweight crown. For those who missed the bout, I will quickly replay the action, and then discuss a valuable lesson that can be learned from this bout.

At the start of the contest, Lamon Brewster came out quickly in hopes of an early knockout. Wladimir responded with an effective jab, gradually taking over the bout. In round four, Klitschko sent Brewster crashing to the canvas with a huge right hand. Lamon surprisingly made it to his feet and finished the round. Klitschko continued the barrage early in round five, until out of nowhere, Brewster landed a picture-perfect left hook, sending Wladimir to the canvas. Brewster then dropped Klitschko again at the bell and referee Robert Byrd stopped the fight.

Lamon Brewster exemplified tremendous heart in earning this hard fought victory. He recovered from a devastating knock down to capture the WBO crown. Leading into this fight, no one gave Brewster a chance. He was selected as an opponent to be used as Wladimir's punching bag. This bout was supposed to restore Wladimir's confidence. Lamon entered the ring with losses in each of his two "major" bouts, dropping decisions to Clifford Etienne and Charles Shufford.

Despite these setbacks, Lamon continued to train hard, never losing site of his goals. He was quoted as saying...

"Boxing is one of the toughest occupations in the world. There are a lot of ups and downs, peaks and valleys. You have to be mentally strong to withstand those and to be able to wait it out until the sun finally shines on you."

Another powerful quote from Lamon is listed below...

*"You can be anything that you want to be, but the thing is that you have to **believe in yourself**. You cannot let people, no matter who it is, even if it's your own mother, tell you what you cannot be, because **you can be anything you want to be**. If that wasn't the case, Lamon Brewster wouldn't be having this conversation with you, because all of my life, so many people told me what I couldn't do."*

No one expected Lamon to defeat Klitschko, except for Lamon. He picked himself up from the canvas and continued to fight. It would have been easy to fold. He could have exited the ring with credit for a valiant effort, but that was

not enough. Lamon Brewster did not enter the ring as a stepping-stone. He came to fight... He came to win.

You can learn from Lamon's confidence and perseverance. We all have bad days in the gym, or perhaps a bad night in the ring. Don't let a bad round, or a bad fight hold you down. Come back strong, always believing in your ability, even when no one else will. Your coach may doubt your abilities, but don't let him (or anyone) determine your future. Only you can decide. Life is a big opportunity, and it is up to the individual to determine his or her success.

If you find yourself facing the crowd favorite, don't let the odds distract you from your goals. Wladimir Klitschko was a huge favorite. Everyone had written Lamon off before the bout.

But guess what?

No one enters the ring but you and your opponent. The crowd isn't there to fight for their favorite boxer. Your future is at your disposal. You have two hands, and your opponent has two hands. Nothing more, nothing less. You must decide whether you will quit when the going gets tough, or whether you will continue to fight against the odds.

No one said this sport would be easy. Stick with it, continue to train hard, and good things will happen.

As former NFL great **Mike Ditka** once said, *"You are never a loser until you quit trying."*

DOING IT “WRIGHT”

On March 13th, 2004, Winky Wright defeated Shane Mosley to become the undisputed Junior Middleweight champion. Let's quickly review a few lessons that we can take from the bout...

PRESSURE IS NOT LIMITED TO PUNCHING

Winky Wright initiated the action throughout the bout. He was the busier man with his hands, but also the physical aggressor. After each combination, Winky would step forward, closing the gap between himself and Mosley. He did not allow Shane a chance to rest between combinations. Winky applied pressure with his hands and body. He would punch, step forward, muscle Shane backwards, and then punch again. As the rounds passed, it was clear that Shane was running out of gas. The continuous pressure would be enough to tire any fighter. Winky Wright fought an excellent bout. He established the jab throughout, while following up with effective combination punching. He pressured Mosley throughout the bout, by dictating the action, and “owning” the ring. He exemplified effective aggression throughout the contest.

DO NOT BACK STRAIGHT UP

Shane Mosley made this mistake throughout the bout. Rather than boxing from angles, Mosley was content to back straight up when attempting to avoid Winky's punches. This is a huge mistake. You should never back straight up. When you back straight up, you become a huge target, and limit your counter punching opportunities. You should instead use lateral movement. After retreating 1 or 2 steps, you must either pivot, side-step, or begin punching.

One of the best ways to fight a taller opponent is by pressing the action forward. By doing so, the tall opponent is often forced to back straight up. When he goes back in a straight line, his body becomes a huge target.

Shane Mosley failed to use lateral footwork throughout the bout. He was not able to establish angles for offense or defense.

I cannot emphasize the importance of angles and proper footwork. Always be looking for the angle. Do not stand directly in front of your opponent. Mosley made this mistake, and Wright punished him for it. Use angles, angles, and more angles. Punch, and then move. You are not a statue. Do not become a

stationary target. Do not neglect your roadwork. You need a good pair of legs to continuously move around the ring.

ONE DIMENSION IS NOT ENOUGH

Boxing is a complex sport. Shane Mosley fought a one-dimensional bout. He did not use his boxing ability. He loaded up on single power punches, neglecting to throw combinations. Meanwhile, Winky Wright ripped multiple punch combinations throughout the bout.

Speed is important. Power is important. Strength is important. Each attribute is important, but by themselves, not one is enough to become a successful boxer. Shane Mosley was clearly the more powerful man, but he did not apply his power through skill. Winky Wright fought a superior bout.

This bout was a perfect example that “one-punch” knockout power does not define a complete boxer. Shane Mosley did not utilize the talents that made him a world champion earlier in his career. He became one-dimensional, relying too much on single power punches, neglecting the importance of angles, combination punching, and lateral movement.

TARVER SHOCKS THE WORLD

Antonio Tarver shocked the world on May 15th, 2004, scoring a devastating 2nd round knockout over former Pound For Pound King Roy Jones.

Antonio landed just seven punches in the bout, but there are many lessons to be learned from this brief contest...

CONFIDENCE

Perhaps most importantly, this bout teaches us the value of confidence. Antonio Tarver believed in himself when no one else would.

As a youngster, Antonio Tarver became involved with drugs. He was arrested and underwent rehabilitation for his problem. Antonio hit rock bottom. His turning point came after watching Roy Jones Jr. represent the USA in the 1988 Olympic Games.

Antonio had previously boxed with Roy as a young amateur. Witnessing Roy compete in the Olympics reignited Antonio's flame for competition. He returned to the amateurs, narrowly missing the Olympics in 1992, before earning a spot on the team in 1996.

At age 27, Antonio Tarver realized his dream to represent the United States Olympic boxing team. After earning a Bronze medal at the games, Antonio turned professional in 1997.

Despite his amateur success, many promoters felt Antonio was too old to make a serious impact in the professional game. Antonio ignored his critics, winning his first sixteen bouts.

In his seventeenth bout, Antonio faced off with my good friend Eric Harding. Tarver lost the bout, but showed tremendous courage, fighting with broken ribs and a broken jaw endured in the late rounds. He was labeled a "good fighter" with heart, but one who was unable to defeat the elite members of the division.

Antonio Tarver was surrounded by doubters. It would have been easy to give up, but Antonio refused to succumb to the skeptics. He rededicated himself to the sweet science. In his own words, he admittedly won his first sixteen bouts on natural talent, never pushing himself to improve.

His defeat to Eric Harding was a wake up call. Antonio returned to the gym, hired a nutritionist, and focused on his strength and conditioning. He started working with Buddy McGirt and began to disprove former doubters with victories over Lincoln Carter, Reggie Johnson, Chris Omar Johnson and finally Eric Harding. After knocking Harding out in their rematch, Antonio continued his winning ways by dominating former world champion Montell Griffin.

As Antonio describes, he became a consummate professional, no longer relying solely on natural talents. No matter how good you are, there is always someone as good or better. Antonio's victory over Roy Jones is living proof that you can never "settle". If you plan to succeed in this sport, you must train for every bout as if you were fighting for the world title.

Antonio Tarver became a hungry fighter when others doubted him. He did not succumb to the negativity that surrounded him. He turned his life around and became a world champion.

He told us all along that he would defeat Roy Jones by knockout. No one believed him. Tarver believed in himself when others wouldn't. This is the story of his life and his career.

Confidence and self-assurance are important attributes for all fighters. You must know that you belong. You must know that through hard work, dedication, and consistency that you CAN achieve greatness.

If you do not believe in yourself, how can you expect others to believe in you?

Do not let anyone dictate your future. I have seen negative coaches tell fighters they will never excel. Don't listen to anyone who puts a ceiling on your potential. The word "potential" is useless. You alone will determine your success or failure.

Antonio Tarver is living proof that you can overcome the odds. He overcame drugs, and most recently overcame the world's best Pound For Pound fighter.

The next time you are scheduled to box against a tournament favorite or a top-ranked professional, think back to Antonio Tarver. You do not need to be a fan of Tarver. Put your personal feelings aside. Antonio Tarver stood up to one of the greatest fighters of all time.

If you feel nervous before a bout, consider how Antonio Tarver felt prior to boxing Roy Jones. He overcame fear by believing in himself. He realized that no one is invincible. We are all human beings with two hands and one chin.

You don't need to respect the crowd favorite or the tournament champion. You can show your respect after the fight. When it's time to rumble, you must enter the ring confident in your abilities. Train like an animal at the gym and gain confidence in your efforts.

Antonio Tarver raised the bar at the gym. He took his training to a new level.

Learn by watching, follow his lead. Believe in yourself and you can literally accomplish anything.

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT TALENT

Is Antonio Tarver faster than Roy Jones? **No**

Is Antonio Tarver a "better" boxer than Roy Jones? **Probably not**

But guess what...

Antonio Tarver knocked Roy Jones out in the second round.

Boxing is not measured by speed, power, or strength. It is more complex than most realize. There will be times when you box against a faster, stronger, or more powerful fighter...

No formulas determine whether you overcome the more powerful boxer. Scientists can perform an infinite number of experiments and still not understand the complexity of this sport. There are too many variables and intangibles involved to make any definitive statements.

If Roy is faster, how did Antonio defeat him?

Antonio Tarver beat speed with timing. Buddy McGirt recently commented on the fight with the following comments (*from Fightnews.com*),

"Guys get so overwhelmed by Roy's hand speed, that they feel there is no way they can beat that speed. But, that's not true. I told Antonio, when Roy shoots, you shoot with him."

Proper timing can defeat speed and power. There will always be someone who is faster. When faced against such an opponent, you must use timing to successfully counter punch. Roy Jones threw a right hand and tasted a picture-perfect left hand in return.

You cannot expect to match speed with someone such as Roy Jones. As McGirt mentioned, you punch **with** the faster puncher. Even a speedster leaves openings when he punches. As soon as the speedster begins his combination, you must pick your spot to land punches in between the incoming blows.

Suppose you are boxing a fighter with a lightning quick jab. Every time you jab, you are countered with two jabs in return. Whenever you attempt to throw a combination, you taste two jabs in return. This is a frustrating situation, which you are bound to encounter.

What do you do when you are “out-gunned”?

Use timing to counteract your opponent’s speed. Rather than starting with the jab, let your opponent initiate the action. Study his jab as he fires it in your direction. Once you have studied the jab, you can “time” the incoming punch and return with a combination of your own.

I can remember boxing a former golden gloves champion who possessed a whip-like jab. He was extremely tall for a Welterweight, and his jab seemed to span from one corner post to another.

I was eating the jab for the first minute of the fight. Each time I attempted to mount an offensive, I was hit with the jab, or held. I could not get inside without being caught up in a clinch. It was clear that my opponent did not want to bang on the inside.

I immediately shifted gears, assuming the role of counter puncher. I sat back and let the action come to me. I began parrying the jab, countering back with a jab of my own. It was much easier to study my opponent’s arsenal when I let him bring the fight to me. I quickly realized that he was dropping his left hand after throwing the jab. He would snap out the jab, and lazily return it to his face.

At 1:51 in the first round, I ended the bout with an overhand right. With one punch, the fight was over.

PICK YOUR SPOT

I decided that as soon as he jabbed, I would instantly throw the overhand right. I never saw the punch land. All that I remember is my brother jumping out of his seat in celebration. When I sensed his jab coming, I slipped to my left and threw the right hand, knowing that my opponent’s chin would be exposed. I overcame his jab by properly timing the right hand.

You cannot always beat your opponent with the jab. He may be too fast to defeat by initiating the attack. In these situations, you must rethink your strategy. There is a strategy for EVERY fighter. Antonio's victory proved to the world that anyone can be defeated. All fighters are human beings. If a human being gets hit right, he can go down. Roy Jones is human. He was hit with a perfect punch and tasted the canvas.

“READING” YOUR OPPONENT

Another important element of timing involves “reading” your opponent's actions.

Many fighters telegraph their punches. For example, many power punchers “load up” before punching. They may momentarily cock the right hand prior to throwing the cross. They may cock the jab back slightly before snapping it forward.

When a fighter telegraphs his punches, he becomes much easier to counter. You wait for the “signal” and respond accordingly. If your opponent cocks the jab, you can respond as soon as he begins to cock the hand. Don't wait for the punch to be thrown. You can counter with an overhand right with confidence that his jab will be following.

Buddy McGirt mentioned that Roy Jones had a tendency to throw wide punches when mounting an attack. Due to Roy's tremendous hand speed, his opponent's would commonly “shell up” into a defensive posture following a Roy Jones combination. Roy was simply too fast to handle. No one could exploit his occasional tendency to throw wide punches.

Antonio was instructed to throw straight punches down the middle whenever Roy Jones punched. Antonio may not have seen Roy's right hand coming, but it doesn't matter. He sensed movement, and responded by throwing the left hand. When I landed the counter punch, I never saw his jab. I **anticipated** the punch, and responded accordingly.

Let's look at another example...

It is common for conventional fighters to either drop the right hand as they throw the left jab, or raise the right elbow out to the sides when the jab is thrown. In the first instance, the right hand drops, which creates an opening for a counter left hook to the head. In the second instance, the elbow flares to the sides, which creates an opening for a counter left hook to the body (the rib cage becomes exposed when the elbow flares outward).

If you carefully “read” your opponent’s actions, you will notice these mistakes. You can anticipate the incoming jab and immediately respond with a counter punch. For example, as soon as the jab is thrown, you instantly slip to your left, and respond with a left hook to the body or head. Felix Cruz, a former amateur standout at 125 lbs from our gym in Hartford, CT, had an excellent counter left hook. He would commonly slip the incoming left jab to his left, and respond with a double left hook (body and head).

Many beginning boxers fail at counter punching because they wait too long to counter. Consider the old bob and weave drill. Your coach throws a right hand, you weave under the punch, step to your left, and return with a left hook to the punch mitts. This counter punch is drilled at almost every gym in the country. Unfortunately, in the heat of the moment, very few fighters are able to weave under the incoming right hand and respond with an accurate left hook. By the time you throw the punch, your opponent is often out of range.

Some of the best counter punchers become effective by **anticipating** their opponents attack. You throw the counter punch almost simultaneously. If you know your opponent drops the right hand, there is no need to wait to parry the jab, and THEN counter. Counter with the left hook immediately. This strategy is similar to the “block a jab and jab” drill that was discussed previously. As soon as your opponent starts his jab, you throw a jab of your own, using your non-punching hand up to “catch” the incoming jab. This is one of the most effective (and basic) counter punches in boxing.

Read your opponent, anticipate his actions, and respond accordingly.

YOU ARE ALWAYS IN THE FIGHT

You could be losing every minute of every round, and land one punch that ends the fight. Antonio Tarver showed us all that it only takes one punch. No one is invincible.

You may find yourself losing every round. Many individuals in this situation will “give up” without actually quitting. They become content with simply going the distance, no longer “trying” to win. Forget his mentality. Flush it down the toilet! It only takes one punch to end a fight. The fight is not over until the last bell rings. You need to keep fighting and NEVER quit.

In 1999, Micky Ward fought Reggie Green in Salem, New Hampshire. Green was 30-3 at the time. He was the NABF champion, and had just lost a VERY close decision to world champion Sharmba Mitchell.

Green boxed impressively against Ward, mounting a lead on the scorecards. As the late rounds approached, it appeared that Ward would need a miracle to win. Micky Ward dug down and mounted a tremendous attack in the late rounds. He battled through fatigue and nine rounds of punishment. Ward finally caught up to Green, hitting him with devastating punches to the body and head.

With 20-seconds remaining in the bout, the referee stopped the contest. Reggie Green was ahead on two of the three scorecards. All he needed to do was finish the round. Micky Ward erased these plans, winning the bout by last minute TKO.

Micky never gave up. He fought until the last minute of the last round. Ward was hit repeatedly for nine rounds, but remained focused on the task at hand. His perseverance paid off.

Keep fighting!

RECOMMENDED READING

I often speak about the mental aspect of boxing. If you fight competitively, the article contained within the following link is a MUST READ.

Boxing's Green Mile

<http://www.eastsideboxing.com/boxing-news/dimichele0104.php>

The link below is not specifically directed towards boxing, but there are several outstanding articles regarding the mental aspect of sports performance. I recommend that you read each article on this page. These articles are loaded with motivational words that you can direct towards your training...

Athlete's Mind

<http://www.ironcurtainlabs.net/athletes.html>

If you are a competitive boxer, I highly recommend **Shadows of a Room** by trainer and commentator Teddy Atlas. It is important to read the story in its entirety. The true message is not delivered until the final paragraph.

Anyone who has ever boxed before will relate to this story. Always remember, whatever thoughts are racing through your mind, are also racing through your opponent's...

Shadows of a Room

<http://secondsout.emojo.com/Ringside/perspective.cfm?ccs=359&cs=9883>

Below are two books that I highly recommend for all boxers and boxing enthusiasts. These are not "training books", but well worth the read.

1. **The Black Lights: Inside the World of Professional Boxing** - By Thomas Hauser
2. **In This Corner 42 World Champions Tell Their Stories.** - By Peter Heller

ADDITIONAL TIPS

MY COACH DOES NOT BELIEVE...

One of my goals is to advance boxing by disproving many of the archaic training myths that haunt our sport. Some of the most common myths pertain to weight training and long-distance running.

Old school trainers will teach you to run 5 miles each day. They also insist that you avoid the weight room entirely. These trainers grew up in a different era, when science was nowhere near as advanced as it is today. Unfortunately, many old school trainers have passed myths down to their fighters, who eventually pass these same myths down to new boxers, and so on... The end result is a misunderstanding of boxing training and conditioning requirements. Archaic training myths have been passed down generation after generation.

I recently received an email from a customer of **The Boxer's Guide** who informed me that his trainer opposed weight training and interval running. This situation is common with our sport. I interact with several trainers who continue to oppose interval running and strength training.

What does a fighter do in this situation?

This is a tough question to answer. As a fighter, you must develop a sense of trust with your trainer. You must trust the advice of your trainer. He is the person who will be working your corner and preparing you for future bouts.

But what about when his advice contends with science? Science may paint a different picture from what your trainer advises. Should you tell your coach that he is wrong and inform him about the benefits of anaerobic conditioning and strength training?

Let me list a few names that come to mind who all work with weights and anaerobic conditioning...

- Shane Mosley
- Oscar De La Hoya
- Kostya Tszyu

- Kermit Cintron
- Evander Holyfield

Aside from their strength and conditioning practices, what else do these fighters share?

I will answer this question for you... These fighters all share well deserved recognition as world-class boxers. These are the best of the best. These athletes always perform in elite physical condition. Evander Holyfield may be past his prime, but in his day, he was one of the best-conditioned boxers of all-time.

It is difficult to argue with results. These fighters are living proof that strength training will NOT make you slow, as long as you perform your strength work in a boxing specific manner. We are not bodybuilders, so don't worry about how a bodybuilder trains. We are boxers.

You can unquestionably lift weights in a manner that will increase strength and power, without detracting from your boxing training program.

Rather than start an argument with your trainer, I suggest that you calmly discuss the topic. Explain to him what you have learned regarding the subject. If he does not agree, ask him for six weeks to prove the value of this form of training. A six-week training program will be plenty of time to demonstrate considerable increases in anaerobic strength and power.

Do not limit your ability based on what someone else does not know. You are the athlete, so take it upon yourself to improve your performance. You obviously care about your performance, considering that you purchased **The Boxer's Guide**. If your trainer does not agree with anaerobic conditioning and strength training, you owe it to yourself to perform these routines on your own time.

You only live once, so I advise you to train without regrets. It is time to put an end to these old-school myths. It is YOUR responsibility to maximize YOUR strength and conditioning. No one can perform the routines for you. You need to speak with your coach, or take the initiative to improve your strength and conditioning on your own time.

QUESTIONS FROM CUSTOMERS

Question: What are the best gloves for sparring and bag work?

My Response: I personally prefer to use gloves manufactured by Grant. In the past I have trained with gloves from Everlast, Title, Ringside, Reyes, Contender, and Grant. The Grant gloves provide the best fit. I have broken my hand three times in the past so I need a glove that gives a tight, secure fit. I have not had any problems since I switched over to Grant. I spar with 16-ounce gloves and hit the bag with either 12 or 16-ounce training gloves. I also have a weighted pair that I occasionally use for conditioning.

Question: I am 27 and have never boxed before. Is it too late to start?

My Response: Each month I receive questions from aspiring fighters who fear that they are too old to get started in the sport. My response is always the same. It is never too late to get started in the sport of boxing. Not everyone will be a world champion but this is no reason to walk away from the sport. Consider that Bernard Hopkins defeated Tito Trinidad at age 36. At age 36, Hopkins fought the best fight of his life. Micky Ward is fighting his best at age 37. Lawrence Clay-Bey did not make the US Olympic team until he was 31. Another great example is the sport's latest prospect Nate Campbell. At age 30, Campbell is 23-0 with 21 KO's. He just turned pro two years ago. Campbell is living proof that it is never too late to chase down your dreams. I'm sure there were plenty of skeptics that told Campbell that he was too old to pursue a professional career. He refused to listen to his doubters. He fought his first 11 bouts without a trainer! He mounted 11 impressive victories and now trains with former world champion Buddy McGirt.

Science and nutrition have advanced at an expeditious pace in recent years. We must advance in parallel with the improvements in science. By doing so, we push back the traditional "boxing clock". What used to be considered "old" does not hold true today. So, the next time that you are worried about age, STOP WORRYING and get to the gym. Nate Campbell did not worry himself out of the gym. He did just the opposite by working hard and accepting nothing but the best.

Do not forget the words of Henry David Thoreau, "Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it"

Question: Should plyometrics be combined with weight training? Is Complex Training (Weights + Plyometrics) too stressful to the body?

My Response: Unfortunately, many trainers have not integrated complex training into their routines. These trainers believe that complex training is too stressful to the muscular (and nervous) system. I disagree with those that believe plyometrics should not be combined with weight training. Let me explain... First, it is important to note that plyometrics should not always be integrated into a complex routine. These routines are intended for advanced athletes that are approaching the peak of a training cycle. In addition, you must allow significant rest between each set in the complex routine. It is recommended that you rest between 2 and 5 minutes. More advanced athletes should actually rest longer due to the intensity in which they perform these movements.

Complex training allows a boxer to work the muscles in conjunction with the nervous system. In time, slow twitch muscle fibers begin to behave like fast twitch fibers.

You cannot expect to perform complex training on a year-round basis, as it is very stressful to the body. You can however implement these routines into your program as you approach peak strength levels.

Check out this website for more information on Complex Training:

<http://www.brianmac.demon.co.uk/complex.htm>

One of the direct quotes is as follows: "Many athletes include plyometric exercises in their training programs and are well aware of their benefits. However it is slightly less well known that the combination of traditional strength with power and plyometric exercises together results in greater Type IIb recruitment and consequently greater improvements in power and rate of force development."

I strongly recommend the above-mentioned Website. It is a valuable free resource loaded with information for the aspiring athlete.

The home page is located at: <http://www.brianmac.demon.co.uk/>

Question: Do you know any ways to increase hand-eye coordination for boxing?

My Response: As far as hand-eye coordination and the sport of boxing are concerned, the best way to improve your reflexes and coordination are through partner drills, sparring, and mitt work with an experienced trainer. Your trainer

can teach you various counter punching drills with the mitts. You can also work through a variety of drills with a partner inside the ring. For example, you can take turns working offense and defense. For one round, you will go on defense as your partner throws punches. You will be forced to block, slip, and weave under his/her punches. You can alternate each round.

Eventually, as you gain experience, you can begin to spar in a “freestyle” manner. In my opinion, sparring is the best way to develop timing and reactions. Boxing is a sport that is learned by “doing” not by “watching”. There is no substitute for stepping inside the ring to box.

No drills or heavy bags can replicate an actual opponent.

Below is a link to an interesting article on hand-eye coordination that includes some drills you can practice at home.

<http://web.outsideonline.com/magazine/0599/9905body.html>

Also, if you are looking for a product that you can use alone, consider the “Reaction Ball”. I have used the Reaction Ball in the past and it can drive you crazy, but is definitely effective. Check it out at:

<http://www.jumpusa.com/rxnball.htm>

Question: Is it true that having sex before a bout makes you tired?

My Response: This question continues to be one of the oldest debates among boxers and boxing trainers. The old thought is that sex will make your legs weak. Various athletes have different opinions regarding this subject. Below, I have provided a link to a study that analyzed pre-competition sex and performance. First, let me share my two cents...

If you are unsure whether sex will interfere with your performance, you should not take a chance. If you are serious about this sport, you can refrain for a week or two before the fight. If you cannot, you should reconsider your dedication and devotion to the sport. The choice is up to you...

Read over this article regarding the subject:

<http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/sexinfo/?article=anatomy&refid=009>

Question: Why am I running out of breath inside the ring?

My Response: I received this question from a customer who has had problems running out of breath inside the ring. The fighter mentioned that he is "out of breath sooner than expected" and that the mouth guard was not helping matters.

Many fighters face this problem during competition. An actual bout is much different from sparring at the gym. You must deal with nerves and the crowd. Inside the gym, there is no crowd and you are often sparring with a friend or training partner. There is much more pressure during an actual bout.

To prepare for the bout, you must train with intensity. If you fight three rounds, you should spar four. You should train with 3-minute rounds, even if you compete with 2-minute rounds. You will always be more tired in an actual fight, so pick up the intensity at the gym. Train as if you were fighting. You need to get tired at the gym. You need to run out of breath at the gym. If you do not, you are not training with the intensity necessary for the fight. You need to push your anaerobic system to the max. This means hard conditioning drills, intervals, sparring, etc...

Also, if the mouth guard bothers you during the bout, you should begin training with the mouth guard. Hit the bag with the mouthpiece. Run intervals with your mouthpiece. Get comfortable breathing with the mouthpiece. If you can run hard intervals with your mouthpiece, it will benefit you in the fight. You should be comfortable running, hitting the bag, and boxing with the mouth guard in place.

Lastly, learn to relax. You will get tired much faster when you are tense. You will be faster and less fatigued if you can box in a relaxed manner. If you are tense for the entire fight, you will run out of gas. Stay loose and let your punches fly.

There is no substitute for experience. With experience, you will learn to relax and control your breathing. Don't give up. Stay focused and train hard!

Question: Hey Ross, my legs hurt when I run. Can I use swimming as a substitute for my roadwork?

My Response: I receive this question at least once each month. There are several alternatives to roadwork. A few examples include the stationary bike, fast paced swimming, and jump rope. Each of these training devices can mimic the anaerobic demands imposed upon the body when running intervals.

Regardless of the training device that you choose, you must train at a high intensity. Slow paced stationary biking is as useless as slow paced jogging. Neither form of training mimics the physical requirements imposed upon the body when boxing.

World renowned strength coach and athlete John Schaeffer is quoted as saying:

"Boxing is a ballistic, short duration, anaerobic activity. Your body is a unique mechanism. The way you train is what your body will adapt to. If you train in long, slow durations, that's the way your physiological makeup will adjust, and that's the way you'll be able to perform. Why train for a sport that's ballistic - with quick adjustments, jumping, moving dodging throwing punches - in an aerobic way? It's counter-productive. [Many of the traditional training methods] are all done wrong. The anaerobic threshold is where you need to be training. When you train sport-specific, your body adapts to be able to perform ballistically. In training the other way - aerobically, in long, slow durations - sure, you'll be able to move around the ring all day long and not get winded, but are you really maximizing your potential?"

John's emphasis (which I wholeheartedly agree with) is on anaerobic threshold training. In laymen's terms, you need to crank up the intensity! If you choose to substitute your roadwork with another form of training, you must do so at an intense pace. If you swim, you must swim hard. If you ride the bike, you must ride it hard, etc...

Yet, despite these alternatives, I still nominate running as the best form of interval training. When you run, you can push yourself harder than any machine will allow. When you box, you are on your feet. You must strengthen the legs to move around the ring with explosive, ballistic movements.

Swimming is an excellent exercise that I recommend, but we do not fight in the pool. We fight on our feet. I have experimented with various forms of interval training, including pool intervals, bike intervals, and rope intervals. I have also experimented with intervals on the treadmill.

In my opinion, none can compare to roadwork intervals. When you run on open land, there are no machines restricting your movement. There are no machines controlling your movement. Your only limitation is your own physical condition.

To summarize, I enjoy various alternatives to interval training as an occasional form of variety. Swimming and stationary biking are great supplements to your training program. I would prefer to see you use these training methods as a supplement however, rather than a replacement.

It is an awful feeling to have no legs inside the ring. The best way to avoid this situation is through a consistent, high intensity roadwork schedule.

Question: Should I train if I am feeling sick?

My Response: It depends... You can usually train with a minor cold or nasal congestion. During this time, a slow paced run will often help you feel better and boost your immune system. If however you are suffering from the flu or a virus, with fever, headache, and sore throat, it is best to take a few rest days. Most doctors recommend that individuals avoid intense exercise when symptoms occur below the neck, particularly the chest and heart areas. If you are suffering from congestion, pains, or a sore throat, it is best to take a break from intense exercise. You will heal much quicker by allowing the body a chance to rest and recover.

Your immune system will be under enough stress just fighting the illness. By exercising, you will hamper your body's ability to recover from the flu or virus. Rest up and use common sense. A few days of rest will not take away several months of hard work.

Question: Ross, why shouldn't boxers train like bodybuilders? They have awesome physiques.

My Response: Boxing is a sport that requires speed, strength, power, agility, balance, coordination, and skill. The majority of a boxer's time should be dedicated to skill training and sport-specific conditioning. Strength training is important, but never a replacement for skill training. The weight room will not give you the anaerobic endurance necessary to throw over 100 punches per round.

Bodybuilders have different training objectives than boxers. A bodybuilder trains with the purpose of developing an impressive physique. Their competition involves posing various muscle groups. Many bodybuilders lift weights six days per week. The bodybuilder does not spar at the gym, hit the mitts, run intervals, or work on hooking off the jab.

Boxing is a skill sport that requires tremendous strength and endurance. If you spend six days per week in the weight room, you will detract from your boxing training. You will have less energy to hit the bag, to spar, to run, and to work on specific skills. Too many young boxers turn to the weight room, rather than working on boxing technique. Many of these boxers have trouble feinting, slipping punches, hooking off the jab, and doubling up on their jab. These boxers should focus more time towards improving technique and sport-specific

conditioning. Intervals, minute drills, heavy bag drills, and sparring are all excellent ways to prepare for a fight. Strength training is also important, but it is only one piece of a much more complex equation.

Bodybuilders use weights as their primary form of training. A fighter must focus on much more. Boxers can satisfy their strength training needs with 2-3 days per week in the weight room.

Question: What is the best pre-fight meal?

My Response: When selecting a pre-fight meal, stick with foods that you are accustomed to eating before training. Do not try a meal for the first time on the day of your fight. You should experiment with different meals while training. For example, I train each evening at 5PM. I always eat a small meal between 2 and 3PM. I prefer to eat chicken or tuna fish on whole wheat bread, along with a piece of fruit such as an orange. I drink plenty of water, and occasionally mix it with Gatorade (half water, half Gatorade). I eat this meal almost every day before I train. Why would I want to try something different before a fight?

Your pre-fight meal should be no different from your pre-workout meal. Last minute experimentation is a bad idea for pre-fight meal selection. The meal should be light, contain low glycemic index carbohydrates, along with some protein. You should also drink plenty of fluids, preferably water. If you opt for a sport's drink, choose one that is low in sugar, such as Gatorade or Powerade.

Question: I have seen a lot of fighters train with Albolene on their body. Does your recommend rubbing Albolene on before training?

My Response: Albolene was originally created as a product to remove makeup. Boxers however noticed that Albolene caused them to sweat more while training. Many fighters rub Albolene on their arms, back, shoulders, midsection, and legs before training. Title Boxing promotes Albolene as "a liquifying cream that opens the pores, causing the body to sweat quicker and easier..."

I have used Albolene while training to fight. It helps you to break a sweat and warm-up much faster. Many fighters use Albolene for increased sweat while "drying out" to make weight for a competition. I do not recommend drying out as it can lead to severe dehydration, which will surely detract from performance. If you use Albolene, be sure to drink plenty of fluids before and after training. I am sure many people will disagree with the use of Albolene, but I have been around fighters who have used the product for years, and would not train any other way. I have used it, and continue to use it without any problems.

You can purchase Albolene through [Ringside](#) or [Title Boxing](#), but you can probably find it cheaper at a pharmacy such as CVS.

Question: What are some strategies that you recommend when fighting a taller opponent?

My Response: There are several strategies for fighting taller opponents. I have been boxing against taller fighters my entire life. One of the biggest mistakes that boxers make when fighting a taller opponent is their failure to use the jab. The shorter fighter can still be quite effective with his jab. I have always had success when jabbing to the body.

Many people will say, “Yeah but the jab to the body is a useless punch...”

Wrong!

Let’s review a few options that you have when jabbing to the body...

- You can jab low, and then jab high
- You can jab low, and then hook upstairs (to the head)
- You can jab low, jab high, and then finish with a right hand to the head
- You can jab low, and then follow up with an overhand right

The jab to the body is not a power punch, but it opens up other opportunities. Go watch Floyd Mayweather fight. He has an awesome jab to the body. Floyd is not a tall boxer, but he has an excellent jab.

You can also jab to the chest. This is perhaps the most neglected punch in all of boxing. As I mentioned previously, do not become a headhunter. Step in with a hard jab to the chest. You can literally knock the wind out of someone by hitting him in the chest.

Also, counter off the taller man’s jab. Boxing is all about timing. With proper timing, you can outland a faster (and taller) opponent. Time your opponent’s jab and counter punch.

Furthermore, when you can back a taller opponent up, he becomes a huge target. Make him go backwards, and his body will be wide open.

Lastly, throw 2 or 3 jabs and step in behind the jab. This will bring you inside. Once you get inside with the taller opponent, THROW PUNCHES! Do not get inside and hold. Once you are inside, you need to let the hands go. Do not crowd yourself so there is no room to punch. You need to be inside, but still

allow enough room to throw quality punches. If you are chest-to-chest with your opponent, your punches may be smothered. Take a step back, and let the hands go. You can then step back inside to smother your opponent's counter punches. Continue to move in and out, never allowing your opponent a chance to breathe. Keep the pressure on. Rely on your conditioning. Look at tapes of Joe Frazier. He was relentless. He wore his opponents down. Frazier was in excellent condition. It would have been impossible to fight with his style if he were not in top condition.

Question: Is it better to perform conditioning drills for one extended time period (ex. 10 minutes), or for "rounds" such as your Minute Drills?

My Response: Both drills have merit, but I recommend training around the work-to-rest ratios of competition. By training all-out for 3 minutes, with a 1-minute rest period between "rounds", you are not only improving your anaerobic threshold, but also your ability to recover. You are training yourself to recover between rounds. You will never box for one extended 10-minute session. Rather, you will fight HARD for 2 or 3-minute rounds. You must be prepared to EXPLODE throughout the entire round, and then quickly recover during the 1-minute rest period.

When you perform an extended conditioning drill (8-12 minutes), you will begin to slow down throughout the drill. Your body will become accustomed to "slowing down". You will not learn to recover between rounds.

You must focus on working at a FAST pace, throughout the entire round. By training around the actual work-to-rest ratios, you teach the body to fight hard during each round, and recover during each minute of rest.

Question: I am having troubles making weight and may need to "dry out" for my upcoming match. How many days will I need to dry out?

My Response: One of the most common mistakes with "drying out" is to dry out too early. If you are having serious difficulties making weight, you may be in the wrong weight class. Do not fool yourself into believing that lower is always better. In many instances, I would prefer to see you box at a more comfortable weight, where you are able to eat properly. If not, there is a good chance that you will enter the ring completely dehydrated, with no energy to fight.

To those unfamiliar with the phrase "drying out", this refers to sweating or spitting out liquids to reduce bodyweight. If you are ever at one of the national amateur boxing tournaments, you can expect to see many fighters chewing on

gum (to build up saliva) and then spitting into a cup. This practice will reduce the athlete's weight, by reducing the fluids held within the body.

Although not encouraged, such practices are often required to lose the last pound or two. The fighter must then scramble to hydrate as quickly as possible after weighing in. In these circumstances, I recommend a drink such as Pedialyte to restore the body's electrolytes.

If you must "dry out" to make weight, do so just before the weigh in. You should never begin drying out several days in advance. If you must lose more than a few pounds, you are either in the wrong weight class, or you have waited too long to lose the weight.

A competitive boxer should remain close to his fight weight throughout the year. Do not make things more difficult by allowing your weight to fluctuate. If you box at a national tournament such as the National Police Athletic League tournament, you will be required to weigh in throughout the week. You may need to box as many as 5 days in a row, weighing in each day. You will not be able to eat much food if you are struggling to make weight.

Furthermore, many local amateur tournaments conduct weigh-ins very close to the actual bouts. You may only have 2 hours to hydrate, which is not enough time. Fortunately, most national tournaments allow the boxers to weigh-in early in the morning. You then have all day to rehydrate and eat.

You will not have this luxury at a local amateur tournament. For this reason, do not become dependent on drying out.

If you have no other options, I recommend chewing gum and spitting into a cup. By chewing the gum, your mouth will fill with saliva. You can then spit this saliva into the cup. Do not exercise with plastic bags on when attempting to dry out (a common mistake). You will not only lose valuable fluids, but also lose valuable strength. If you must dry out, do so without exerting energy from exercise. You will need all of your strength inside the ring.

To summarize, I do not recommend drying out. Stay on top of your weight to avoid last minute struggles. If you must dry out the last few pounds, limit physical activities, and do not dry out until the last day. Also, if you find yourself constantly struggling to make weight, consider moving up a weight class.

You will be able to eat more, hence enter the ring with sufficient nutrients to box your best. The decision to move up in weight is often avoided due to mental

fears of competing in a new weight class. Do not let your mind confuse you. You most likely spar with fighters from other weight classes at the gym. Keep this in mind if you are nervous about moving up one weight class. The few pounds that you gain can make a world of difference. You will be able to eat healthy foods, while receiving vital fluids. You can also pack on additional strength via lean muscle mass.

Don't lose the bout on the scales. Eat healthy, train hard, and let your weight determine itself for you.

Question: Should I practice hitting the bag from both stances (conventional and southpaw)?

My Response: This is a great question with multiple answers. Not all trainers are in agreement regarding this topic.

Suppose you are a right-handed boxer (jab with the left hand from the conventional stance). Should you spend any time training as a southpaw with the right hand in front?

Let's look at our options...

If you are a beginning boxer, I do not recommend switching sides when training. You should become proficient from one side first, before worrying about fighting from both stances.

I can remember one fighter at our gym who would spend more time hitting the bag as a southpaw, than he would from his natural (conventional) stance. Marlon Starling (2-time world champion) observed this youngster and made the following comment...

"Why hit the bag southpaw when you still can't box properly from your natural stance?"

As a beginner, it does not make sense to train as a southpaw if you will not be competing from this stance. You would be better off focusing on the specific combinations that you will use in competition. Beginning boxers have enough to learn, without worrying about fighting from the other side. Most beginning boxers are making several mistakes from the traditional stance. These mistakes must be corrected first, before you worry about adding to the fighter's arsenal. It takes time to develop a complete fighter. Do not detract from a fighter's development by focusing on too much at once.

As you become more experienced, you can add an occasional round of sparring and/or bag work from the opposite stance. I personally enjoy hitting the bag as

a southpaw for a few rounds. I do not spend too much time on this objective, but an occasional round can provide several benefits.

Whether you plan to fight from the opposite side or not, you will improve coordination with your non-dominant hand. If you fight from the conventional stance, you have never thrown a straight left hand (left cross). This punch will feel awkward when you first begin training from the southpaw stance. The right hook will also feel awkward. You will be accustomed to throwing the left hook.

With a few rounds of dedicated practice, you will improve overall coordination between both hands. This will benefit you from either stance. You will become a true two-handed fighter. You have two hands, so you may as well coordinate both sides.

Suppose you have a 6-round heavy bag session planned. You can dedicate one round to fighting from the southpaw stance. Use the same fundamentals that you would use from your conventional stance (ex. work the jab, throw combinations, feint, head movement, etc.).

A few rounds per week will generate improvements. If you have at least one year of boxing experience, I would encourage an occasional round from the opposite side. Do not detract from your traditional training, rather you can add to it.